

Nous presentation on ESO Peak Body Options

26 July 2024

We wish to extend our deepest respect and gratitude to all who have served in Australia's defence forces and their families.

We acknowledge the unique nature of military service and the sacrifice demanded of all who commit to defend our nation.

It is an honour for us to engage with and support the veteran community.

Thank you for your service.

Nous Group acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians and the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging, who maintain their culture, country and spiritual connection to the land, sea and community.

This artwork was developed by Marcus Lee Design to reflect Nous Group's Reconciliation Action Plan and our aspirations for respectful and productive engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.



Agenda

- 1 Terms of reference overview
- 2 Stakeholder insights from consultations
- 3 Veteran and family survey insights
- 4 Peak body options
- 5 Discussion and questions

Terms of Reference – Independent options paper for establishment of an ESO Peak Body

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) has engaged Nous Group to explore options for a future ESO Peak Body.

The purpose of the project is to develop multiple options for an ESO Peak Body considering work already undertaken by the sector and insights and feedback from stakeholders.

Audience

The project has engaged stakeholders with an interest in the establishment of an ESO Peak Body in Australia. Consultation will involve stakeholders including the ESO Round Table (ESORT), Younger Veterans – Contemporary Needs Forum (YVF), Deputy Commissioner Forums, in addition to a survey for veterans and their families.

Project scope

This project will develop options which address the following features of a proposed ESO Peak Body. These features will guide the establishment and operation of the Peak Body:

- **Role and purpose**
- **Function**
- **Membership**
- **Governance**
- **Resources**

Out of scope for this project:

- Detailed design of processes, positions, structures or assets of an ESO Peak Body.
- Implementation plans for an ESO Peak Body.

Stakeholder insights

Forums and individual interviews were used to gather key insights regarding peak body features

Role and purpose

Stakeholder priorities for the peak body included:

- **Supporting ESOs** but not veterans directly.
- **Facilitating communication** with/from government.
- **Advocating** for policy changes.
- **Unifying** the sector's voice (while respecting individual ESO autonomy).
- Encouraging **collaboration** and reducing duplication of effort.

Some stakeholders proposed a broader role in the future, including:

- Assisting veterans in navigating ESO services.
- Improving quality of supports by ESOs.
- Ensuring accountability of ESOs.

Function

Stakeholder feedback on functions focused on:

- **Advocacy & Information:** Lobbying government and acting as a central information hub for veterans and ESOs.
- **ESO Improvement:** Enhancing ESO capability through training and setting quality standards.
- **Collaboration:** Creating a platform for ESO knowledge sharing (COP).
- Veteran **Outreach** (long-term): Guiding veterans to resources (future focus due to resources).
- **Regulation** (varied): Proposals ranged from a Code of Conduct to external regulation for funding access.

Membership

Stakeholder feedback for membership included:

- **Inclusivity:** Both ESOs and VSOs, with a clear definition for ESOs.
- **Tiered Membership:** Based on organization type and role, potentially impacting voting rights and benefits.
- **Membership Criteria:** Considering ACNC registration and service-based classification for organisation.
- **Consideration** for smaller groups and federated organisations.
- Distinguishing benefits for charitable vs. for-profit organisations.
- **Membership conditional** on adherence to a Code of Conduct.

Governance

Stakeholder feedback for governance focused on:

- **Representation:** Mix permanent and elected board members with a focus on collective interests, not personal agendas. A revolving Chair should be considered and ensure larger ESOs don't hold undue influence.
- **Diversity:** Board composition reflecting diversity in service experience (conflicts), geography, ADF branches, and potentially skill sets.
- **Transparency & Participation:** Mechanisms for member voices to be heard and a voting system for decision-making. (Paying board positions not widely supported).

Resources

Stakeholder feedback on resources focused on:

- **Government Funding:** Seen as essential, potentially from departments beyond DVA. However, **some** expressed concerns about reliance on government impacting advocacy independence.
- **Membership Fees** (mixed views): Not favoured by all due to potential burden on smaller organisations, but some saw **tiered** fees based on size as a possibility.
- **Alternative Funding Sources (limited support):** Grants and donations were viewed as potentially competitive with existing ESO funding.

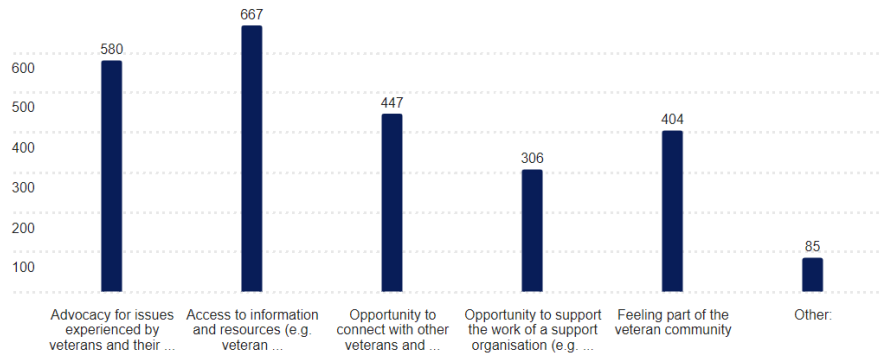
Veteran and family survey

We have had ~820 total responses to the veteran and family survey

Survey respondents to date:

Demographic	% of responses
Veteran	63
Family member of a veteran	19
Both veteran and family member	18

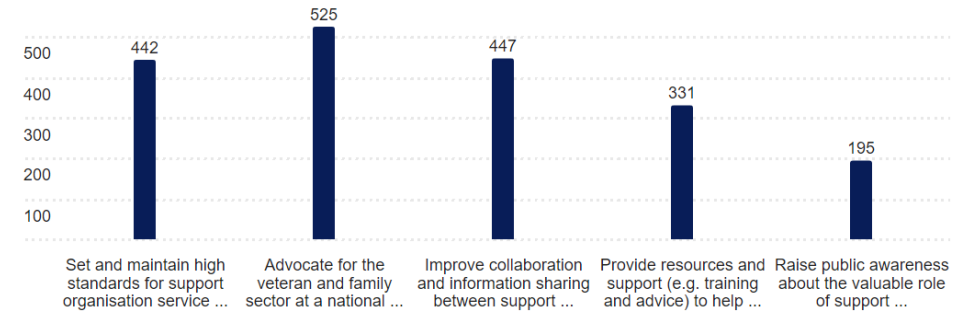
Access to information and resources and advocacy were important factors for respondents when deciding to decide to join a veteran and family support organisation:



The primary services and resources that respondents want to be able to access through a veteran and family support organisations are:

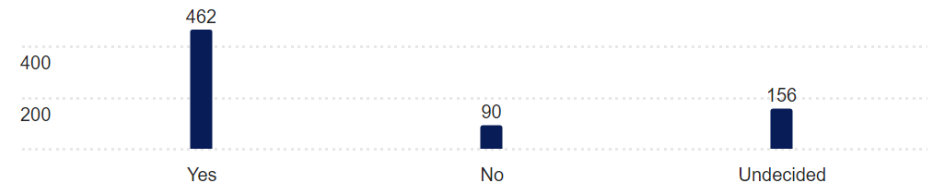
1. Help **navigating veteran entitlements**
2. **Advocacy on behalf of veterans and family sector** to government and other stakeholders
3. **Information on mental health and wellbeing** resources

Advocacy, collaboration and maintaining high standards across the sector were indicated as core reasons as to how a peak body could benefit veterans and families:



~65% of respondents indicated that a peak body **is needed** to better represent the veteran and family sector:

Do you think a peak body is needed to better represent the veteran and family sector?

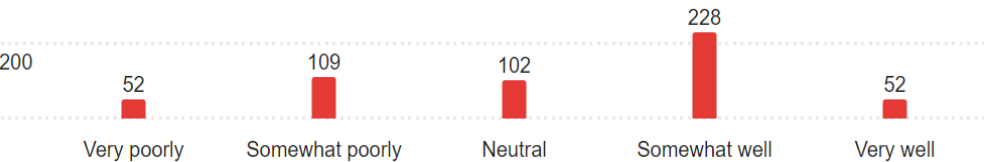


Survey breakdown by member type

Existing member

Access to information and resources, advocacy and opportunity to connect with other veterans were important factors for existing members when deciding to join a veteran and family support organisation:

42% of current ESO members indicate that support organisations 'somewhat well' represent the diverse needs of veterans and families



The primary services and resources that existing members want to be able to access through a veteran and family support organisations are:

1. Help navigating veteran entitlements
2. Advocacy on behalf of veterans and family sector to government and other stakeholders
3. Information on mental health and wellbeing resources

The majority of respondents 'somewhat agree' with the following statements:

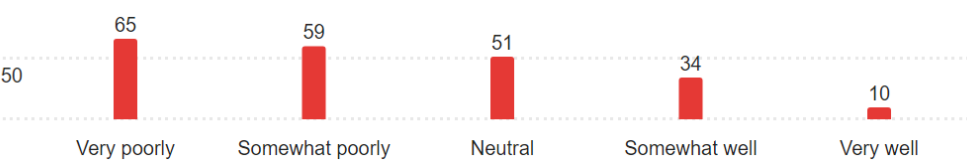
1. Support organisations effectively advocate for the needs of veterans and families
2. Support organisations provide me with the information, services and resources I need
3. Support organisations offer valuable opportunities for veterans and families to connect with each other

63% of respondents indicated that a peak body is needed to better represent the veteran and family sector:

Not a current member

Access to information and resources, advocacy and feeling part of a veteran community were important factors for non-existing members when deciding to join a veteran and family support organisation:

There were mixed reviews from non-members on how support organisations currently represent the diverse needs of veterans / families



The primary services and resources that existing members want to be able to access through a veteran and family support organisations are:

1. Help navigating veteran entitlements
2. Information on mental health and wellbeing resources
3. Advocacy on behalf of veterans and family sector to government
4. Direct service provision

There were mixed responses to the following statements:

1. Support organisations effectively advocate for the needs of veterans and families
2. Support organisations provide me with the information, services and resources I need
3. Support organisations offer valuable opportunities for veterans and families to connect with each other

68% of respondents indicated that a peak body is needed to better represent the veteran and family sector:

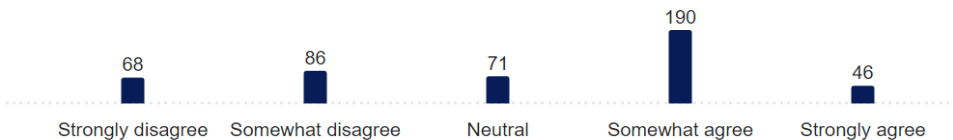
Survey breakdown by peak body preference

Peak body **IS** needed

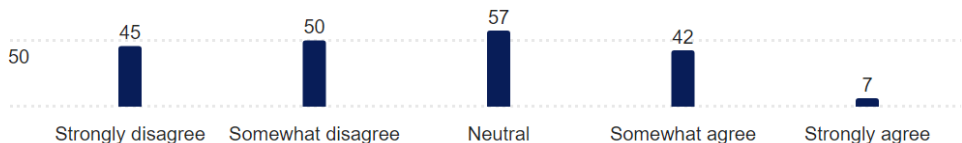
Top 3 answers as to how a peak could benefit the sector:

- 1. **Advocate for veteran and family sector** at a national level
- 2. **Set and maintain high standards** for support organisation services
- 3. **Improve collaboration and information sharing** between support organisations

Veteran and family support organisations effectively advocate for the needs of veterans and families.



Veteran and family support organisations provide me with the information, services and resources I need.

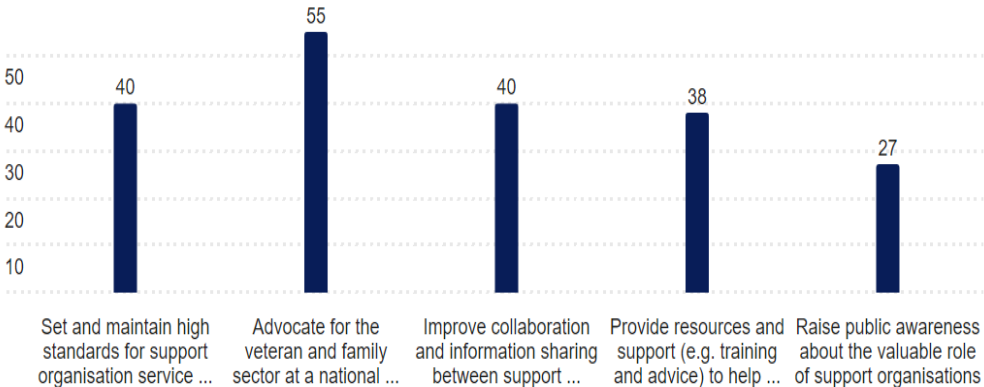


The primary services and resources that existing members want to be able to access through a veteran and family support organisations are:

- 1. Help **navigating veteran entitlements**
- 2. **Information on mental health and wellbeing** resources
- 3. **Advocacy on behalf of veterans and family sector** to government
- 4. Opportunity to connect with other veterans

Peak body **IS NOT** needed

There were mixed responses on how a peak body could benefit the sector:

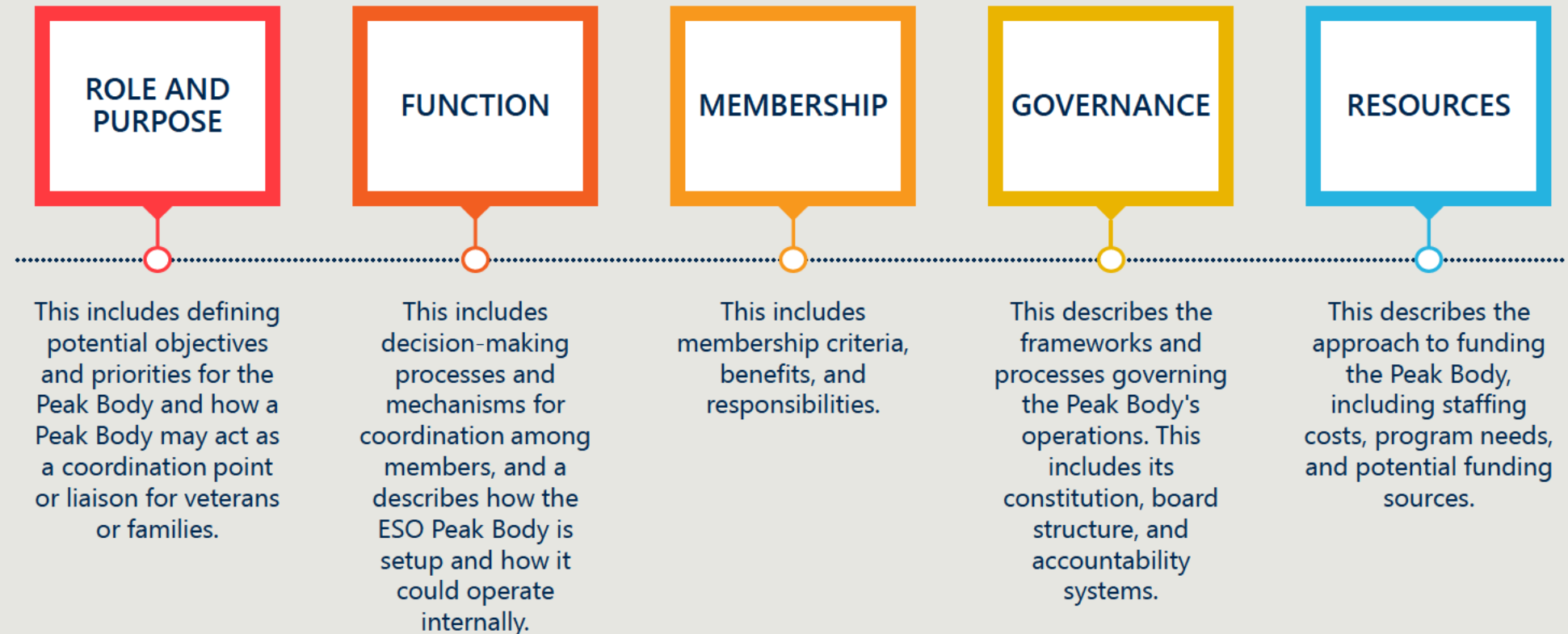


The primary services and resources that existing members want to be able to access through a veteran and family support organisations are:

- 1. **Advocacy on behalf of veterans and family sector** to government
- 2. Help **navigating veteran entitlements**
- 3. **Information on mental health and wellbeing** resources
- 4. Opportunity to connect with other veterans

Options overview

Five key features have been explored in the development of options for the ESO Peak Body



There are 4 options with expanding purposes

PURPOSE	ADVOCACY STREAM		ADVOCACY AND CAPABILITY STREAM	
	OPTION A - CORE ADVOCACY	OPTION A+ ADVOCACY & RESEARCH	OPTION B ADVOCACY & CAPABILITY	OPTION B + ADVOCACY, CAPABILITY & SERVICE NAVIGATION
Create a unified and representative voice of the sector	●	●	●	●
Drive long-term improvements in veteran service delivery through research and innovation		●		●
Enhance the quality of ESO service delivery and bolster sector collaboration			●	●
Improve access to ESO services through service navigation				●

Functions link to the purpose of the Peak Body

FUNCTIONS	ADVOCACY STREAM		ADVOCACY AND CAPABILITY STREAM	
	OPTION A - CORE ADVOCACY	OPTION A+ ADVOCACY & RESEARCH	OPTION B ADVOCACY & CAPABILITY	OPTION B + ADVOCACY, CAPABILITY & SERVICE NAVIGATION
• Collaboration platform / forum	●	●	●	●
• Sector strategic planning				
• Policy and advocacy				
• Communication				
• ESO sector research and innovation		●		●
• Training and education for ESOs				
• Service standards				
• Information to Government to support transition			●	●
• Sector collaboration through Communities of Practice				
• Service navigation				●

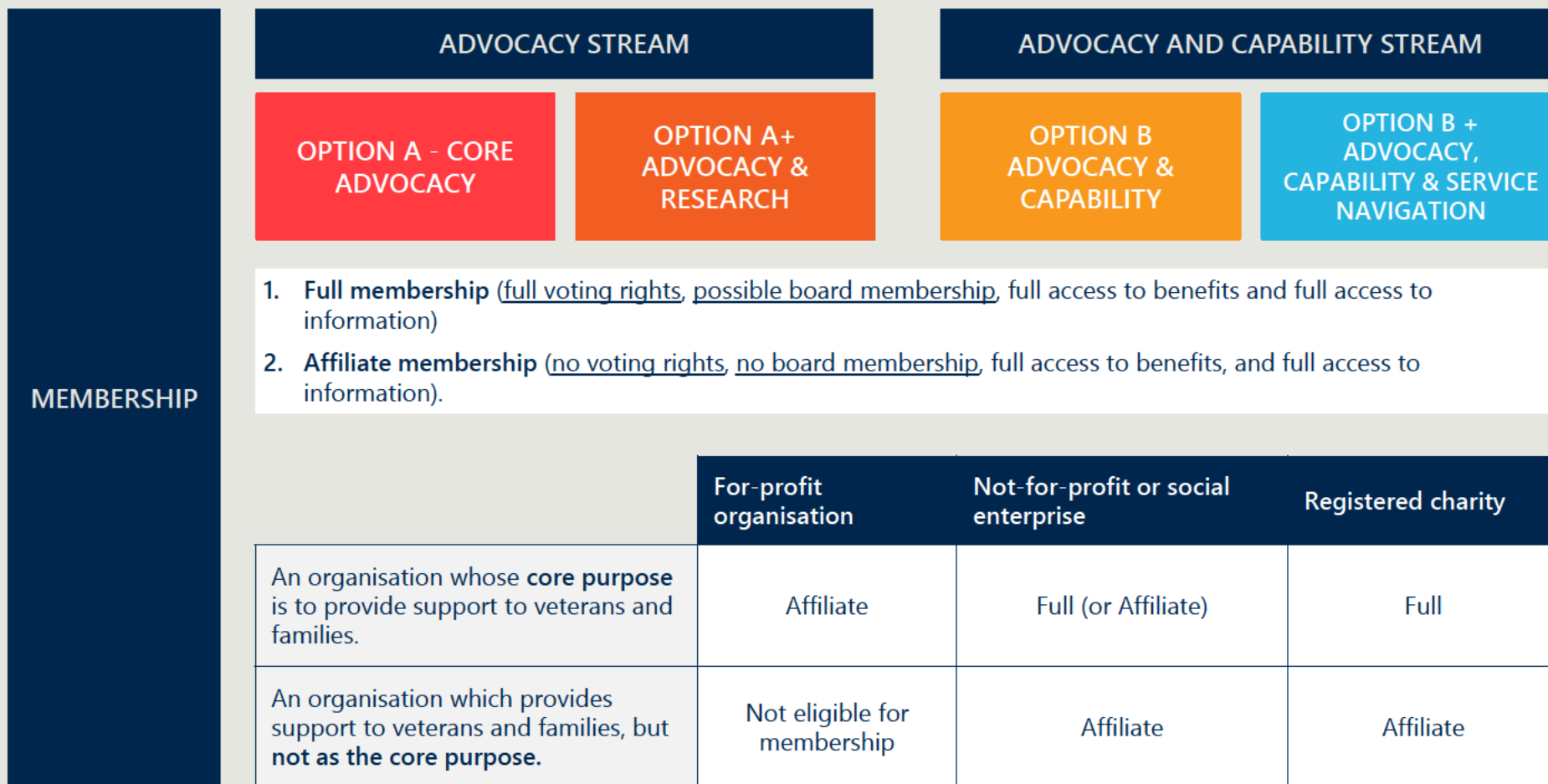
Board size is small to start off with but could grow over time

GOVERNANCE	ADVOCACY STREAM		ADVOCACY AND CAPABILITY STREAM	
	OPTION A - CORE ADVOCACY	OPTION A+ ADVOCACY & RESEARCH	OPTION B ADVOCACY & CAPABILITY	OPTION B + ADVOCACY, CAPABILITY & SERVICE NAVIGATION
Total board size:	9 - 11	9 - 11	11 - 13	11 - 13

All options would have:

- 1 Chair (Independent or not)
- 2-3 Standing members
- Additional elected members
- Independent members

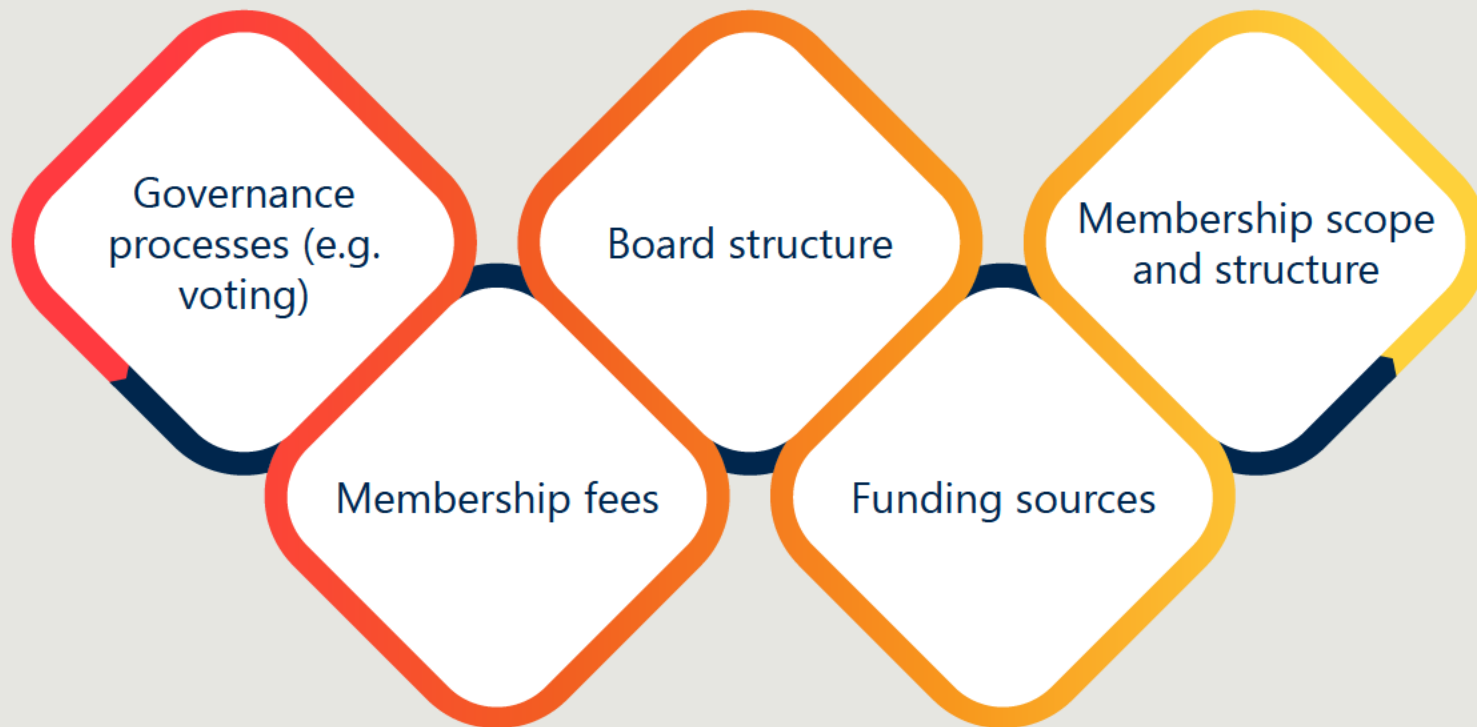
Membership is option agnostic



Cost is primarily driven by staff numbers, the total costs are being finalised

	ADVOCACY STREAM		ADVOCACY AND CAPABILITY STREAM	
	OPTION A - CORE ADVOCACY	OPTION A+ ADVOCACY & RESEARCH	OPTION B ADVOCACY & CAPABILITY	OPTION B + ADVOCACY, CAPABILITY & SERVICE NAVIGATION
COST	~ \$1.3 million	~ \$1.7 million	~ \$2.3 million	~ \$3.1 million
FTE	~6	~8	~11	~14

The holistic peak body options are accompanied by some features that are options agnostic



Discussion and questions

Veteran and Family Organisations Representative Body - options paper

Department of Veteran Affairs

20 August 2024



Nous Group acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians and the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging, who maintain their culture, country and spiritual connection to the land, sea and community.

This artwork was developed by Marcus Lee Design to reflect Nous Group's Reconciliation Action Plan and our aspirations for respectful and productive engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

Disclaimer:

Nous Group (**Nous**) has prepared this report for the benefit of [Department of Veteran Affairs] (the **Client**).

The report should not be used or relied upon for any purpose other than as an expression of the conclusions and recommendations of Nous to the Client as to the matters within the scope of the report. Nous and its officers and employees expressly disclaim any liability to any person other than the Client who relies or purports to rely on the report for any other purpose.

Nous has prepared the report with care and diligence. The conclusions and recommendations given by Nous in the report are given in good faith and in the reasonable belief that they are correct and not misleading. The report has been prepared by Nous based on information provided by the Client and by other persons. Nous has relied on that information and has not independently verified or audited that information.

© Nous Group



Acknowledgement of Veterans Service

We wish to extend our deepest respect and gratitude to all who have served in Australia's defence forces and their families.

We acknowledge the unique nature of military service and the sacrifice demanded of all who commit to defend our nation.

It is an honour for us to engage with and support the veteran community.

Thank you for your service.

Contents

1	Executive Summary	1
2	Introduction and background	8
3	Case for change	10
4	Research of similar representative bodies	11
5	Stakeholder engagement	13
5.1	Summary of stakeholder insights	13
6	Survey analysis	20
6.1	Respondent's views on the current state of veteran support organisations	20
6.2	Respondents' views on a possible representative body	23
6.3	Survey insights incorporated into options design	24
7	Detailed options	25
7.1	Summary of representative body options	25
7.2	Option A: Advocacy stream	26
7.3	Option B: Advocacy and Capability stream	30
7.4	Key issues for consideration in all options	35
8	Next steps and high-level implementation plan	46
8.1	Phase 1 Immediate next steps	48
8.2	Phase 2 Pre-implementation	49
8.3	Phase 3 Establishment	49
8.4	Phase 4 Early operations	50
8.5	Phase 5 Scale	50
	Appendix A Detailed stakeholder engagements insights:	51
A.1	ESORT Forum	51
A.2	Deputy Commissioner Forum Western Australia	54
A.3	Deputy Commissioner Forum Tasmania	56
A.4	Deputy Commissioner Forum Victoria	57
A.5	Deputy Commissioner Forum New South Wales (NSW) and Australian Capital Territory (ACT) ..	59
A.6	Deputy Commissioner Forum Queensland (QLD)	61
A.7	Younger Veterans Forum (YVF)	62
A.8	Interviews with individual stakeholders	64
	Appendix B Staffing costs:	68
	Appendix C Survey Free Text Responses	70
	Appendix D Desktop research inputs	72
	Appendix E Glossary	74

1 Executive Summary

Australia's veteran population comprises nearly 500,000 people¹ who are former serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel, whether they were deployed to active conflict or peacekeeping operations or served without being deployed. Between one quarter to two thirds of this veteran cohort engage with Ex-Service Organisations (ESOs) for social connection and practical support to transition to civilian life.² In addition, around 70 percent of veterans have partners or dependents who may also access support from ESOs or Veterans Support Organisations (VSOs).³

This is a significant cohort of the Australian population who draw upon the support of the ESO and VSO sector to access and advocate for more responsive and comprehensive services for veterans and families. There have been ongoing discussions across the sector (including various forums, round table discussions, and reports) regarding the establishment of a peak body for the ESO and VSO sector. This report provides an evidence base for how a unified voice for the ESO and VSO sector to represent the interests of veterans and families could be realised.

For the purposes of this report, we have used the title Veteran and Family Organisations representative body (representative body) to reflect the scope of the broad sector. The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide has heard evidence from ex-service organisations on the desire to establish a 'peak body' (or representative body) for the ESO and VSO sector.⁴ It is expected that the Royal Commission's final recommendations, due to be released in September 2024, will include reference to the establishment of a representative body.

Nous was engaged to review options for the establishment of a representative body for ESOs

This report intends to provide the basis for the Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) to respond to the Royal Commission's potential recommendations on the establishment of a representative body, and if appropriate, to provide inputs for a co-design process for a representative body within the sector. As such, this report does not provide recommendations. It provides four options for the purpose, functions, membership, governance and resources for a representative body alongside a discussion of the key considerations, risks and benefits of these four options as well as other option-agnostic design decisions.

Consultation and research across the sector informed the design of the options

The draft options in this report were informed by a range of inputs including:

- analysis of comparable national bodies (the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), the Aged and Community Care Providers Association (ACCPA), the National Disability Services (NDS) and international models (the Confederation of Service Charities (Cobseo) in the United Kingdom (UK) and the National Council of Veteran Associations (NCVA) in Canada.
- an assessment of established governance standards from the ACNC and best practices from the Australian Institute of Company Directors were also considered.
- analysis of existing engagement undertaken in the sector in response to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide including previous forum outcomes and Royal Commission submissions (see Appendix D).

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Veterans in the 2021 Census: first result, 30 June 2022 (accessed 6 July 2024), <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/veterans/veterans-in-the-2021-census-first-result>

² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Veteran social connectedness, 26 October 2023 (accessed 6 July 2024), <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/veterans/veteran-social-connectedness/contents/active-membership-to-clubs-and-associations>

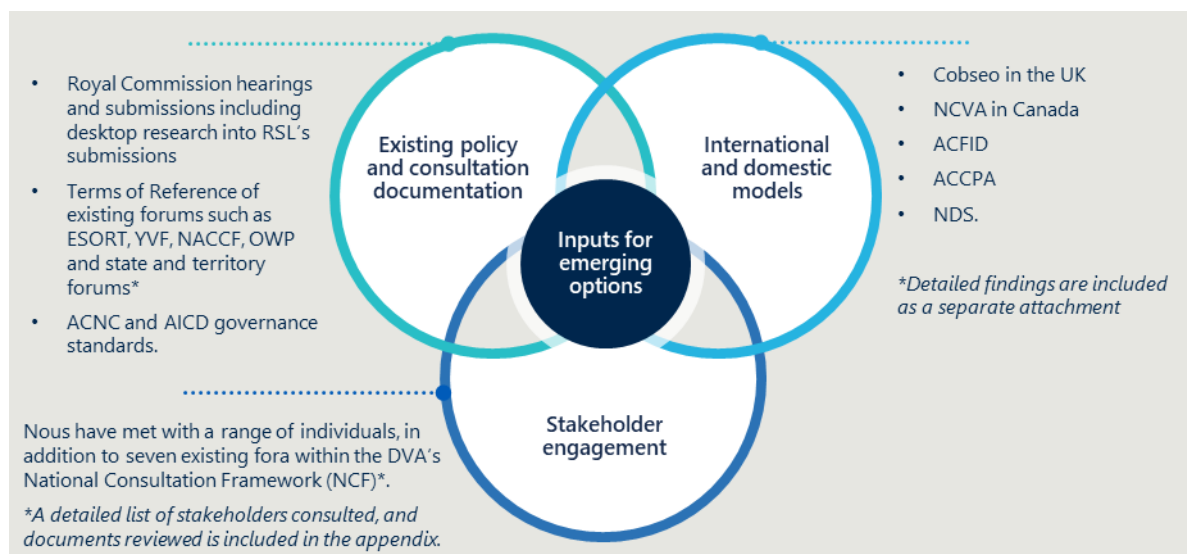
³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, A profile of Australia's veterans, 28 November 2018 (accessed 6 July 2024), <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/veterans/a-profile-of-australias-veterans-2018/summary>

⁴ Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, 2024, <https://defenceveteransuicide.royalcommission.gov.au/>

- extensive input and feedback from a range of stakeholders including individual interviews, workshops with existing fora, and a survey with input from nearly 900 individual veterans and family members. These consultations ensured the key design features of the representative body were realistic, considered the specific needs and priorities of the ESO sector, and could be implemented in the future.

Inputs used to guide the development of the representative body options are indicated below in Figure 1. Note further details of specific stakeholder groups and individuals consulted can be found in Appendix A and a detailed list and analysis of the documents reviewed, and models researched can be found in Appendix D.

Figure 1 | Inputs for emerging representative body options



Consultations revealed diverse perspectives regarding the name of a representative body

Some stakeholders expressed concerns that the term 'ESO' might exclude organisations focused on kinship or comradeship, as they may not consider themselves service providers. Additionally, the emphasis on families within the sector led some to suggest broader terminology like "veterans and families organisations peak body" or including "families" explicitly in the name. Alternative suggestions included "Veteran support organisation peak body" and "Veterans and Families Support Organisations Representative Body" with the latter aiming to avoid confusion with existing fora. For simplicity, in this report we refer to the potential peak body as 'the representative body'. It is important to acknowledge that regardless of the chosen name, there will likely be some level of disagreement due to the diverse perspectives across the sector and its complexity. The name itself is unlikely to sway those already opposed to a representative body's purpose.

Consultation with the sector identified some key needs of the veteran community, the ESO Sector and DVA

Research and consultation with veterans and families, ESOs, and DVA have revealed some key needs across the sector. The representative body would aim to respond to these distinct needs. These are described in Figure 2 overleaf. Further detail is described in Section 5 and Appendix A.

Figure 2 | Key needs of veterans and families, the ESO sector, and DVA

Veterans and families have voiced they need: • A higher quality of service delivery through member organisations. • Easier systems for veterans and families to understand what organisations exist, and where they may receive benefit from membership. • Ways and opportunities to connect with other veterans and families through social forums and other avenues.	The ESO sector has voiced it needs: • A united voice to DVA and the government more broadly. • Balanced representation in consultative fora. • More effective collaboration between ESOs, specifically those who are delivering similar services to their members. • Guidance and standardisation of service expectations and delivery. • Better connectivity to veterans, particularly those not already affiliated with an ESO.	DVA has voiced it needs: • A streamlined way to communicate with the sector. • Stronger collaboration efforts between the Department and the sector. • A way to improve service standards across the ESO sector. • A more productive relationship between the Department and the sector.
--	---	---

Five key features have been explored in the development of options for the representative body

Each option design is broken down into the following features of a representative body. These features could guide the establishment and operation of the representative body. Figure 3 explores each of the key features further.

Figure 3 | Key features

 PURPOSE This includes defining potential objectives and priorities for the representative body.	 FUNCTIONS This includes the representative body's activities and services. It also includes how the representative body is setup and how it could operate internally.	 MEMBERSHIP This includes membership criteria, benefits, and responsibilities.	 GOVERNANCE This describes the frameworks and processes governing the representative body's operations. This includes its constitution, board structure, and accountability systems.	 RESOURCES This describes the approach to funding the representative body, including staffing costs, program needs, and potential funding sources.
--	--	--	--	--

We have designed four complete options for the representative body

Two streams of options were designed, each with a core option and an expanded option to represent shorter and longer-term possibilities. Option A presents the simplest approach and option B+ presents the most complex approach. All options share the core purpose of creating a unified and representative voice for the sector, with the second stream considering a secondary purpose of enhancing the quality of services delivered. The options were informed by stakeholder input from the survey, consultation forums and desktop research that investigated successful peak body models internationally and within Australia. Figure 4, below, explores the core purpose of the proposed four representative body options.

Figure 4 | Purposes of the four proposed representative body options

PURPOSE	ADVOCACY STREAM		ADVOCACY & CAPABILITY STREAM	
	OPTION A CORE ADVOCACY	OPTION A+ ADVOCACY AND RESEARCH	OPTION B ADVOCACY AND CAPABILITY	OPTION B+ ADVOCACY, CAPABILITY AND SERVICE NAVIGATION
Create a unified and representative voice of the sector.	■	■	■	■
Drive long-term improvements in veteran service delivery through research and innovation.		■		
Enhance the quality of ESO service delivery and bolster sector collaboration.			■	■
Improve access to ESO services through service navigation.				■

A summary of features of each of the proposed options is indicated in Table 1 below. Note the grey text within the 'functions' row highlights functions that are common across other options.

Table 1 | Summary of the key features of each option

REPRESENTATIVE BODY KEY FEATURE	OPTION A CORE ADVOCACY	OPTION A+ ADVOCACY AND RESEARCH	OPTION B ADVOCACY AND CAPABILITY	OPTION B+ ADVOCACY, CAPABILITY AND SERVICE NAVIGATION
 Functions	• Collaboration platform • Sector strategic planning • Policy and advocacy • Communication.	• Collaboration platform • Sector strategic planning • Policy and advocacy • Communication • ESO sector research and innovation.	• Collaboration platform • Sector strategic planning • Policy and advocacy • Communication • Training and education for ESOs	• Collaboration platform • Sector strategic planning • Policy and advocacy • Communication • Training and education for ESOs

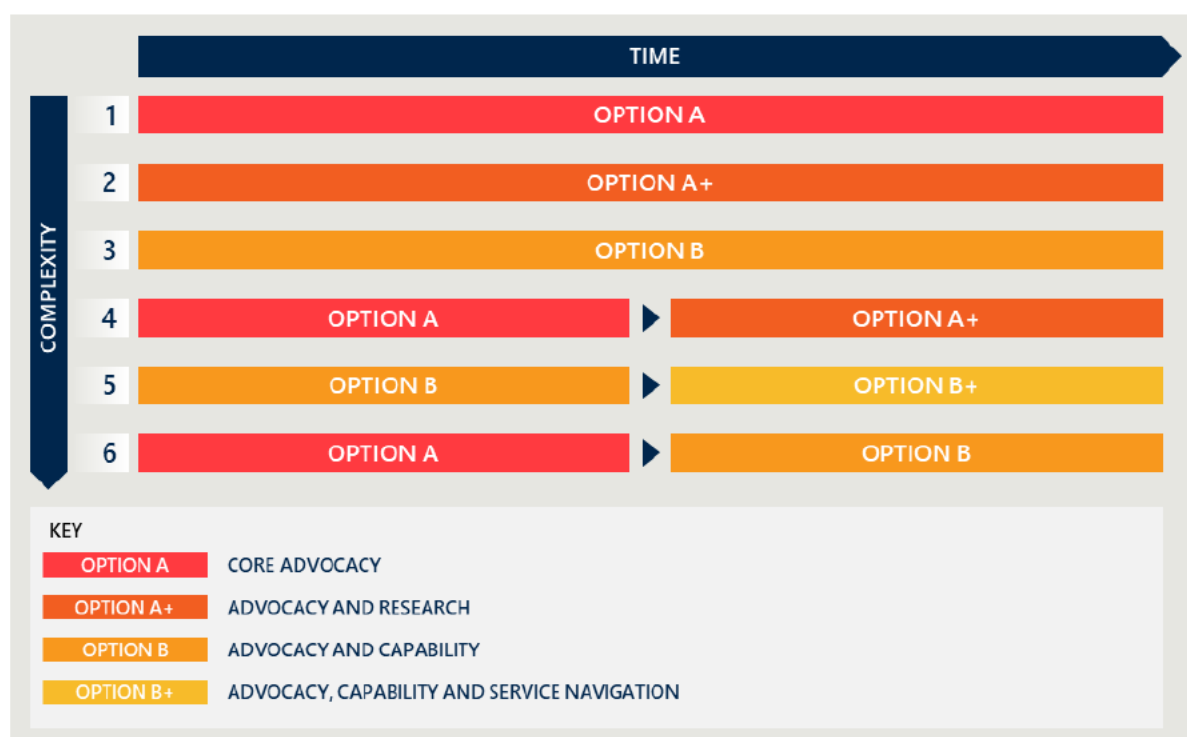
	• Improve service standards • Information provision for new veterans • Promote collaboration among ESOs.		• Improve service standards • Information provision for new veterans • Promote collaboration among ESOs • Centralised service navigation.	
 Membership	Membership is comprehensive. A variety of different organisations can be included in the representative body.			
	There are two tiers of membership: Full and Affiliate.			
	The members may be organised into service clusters.			
 Governance	• Minimum of 9 members • 1 x Chair • 2 x standing members • 5 x elected members • Optional – 1 or 2 x Independent members		• Minimum of 11 members • 1 x Chair • 2 x standing members • 7 x elected members • Optional – 1 or 2 x Independent members	
	Board elections would occur every three years, with a limit of two consecutive terms for all individuals (six years).			
	Key representative body decisions are made through a combination of board consensus and broader member input through voting/polling.			
	Voting processes would involve all ‘full’ members, either through equal or weighted voting.			
	The two key legal structures that can be utilised for the representative body are the Incorporated Associations structure or the Companies limited by guarantee (CLG) structure.			
 Resources	6 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff	8 FTE staff	11 FTE staff	15 FTE staff
	\$1.3 million per year	\$1.7 million per year	\$2.1 million per year	\$2.9 million per year
	Funding for peak operations and delivery will come from both government and members.			
	Membership fees would be tiered by membership type and organisation size. Organisations can apply for fee exemptions.			

Note. Purpose is outlined above in Figure 4.

Options could be implemented in isolation or succession

There are multiple ways to implement the four options. While there's flexibility to combine elements from different options, this will impact the complexity of implementation. The four options are designed to potentially evolve over time and be used in succession. For example, option A could develop into option A+ over time, or even option B. There are various combinations for how the options could be implemented in succession. A summary of six possible option combinations is shown in Figure 5 overleaf.

Figure 5 | Possible option combinations over time



Note. Option B+ has not been designed for immediate implementation. It is therefore presented only as a longer-term extension of option B.

Regardless of the final selection, all options require thorough planning, securing the necessary approvals, and establishing a robust organisational structure before launch to set the representative body up for long-term success. This is explored in detail in Section 7.

There are important design decisions to make, irrespective of the preferred option

There are some aspects of the representative body which would need to be considered, regardless of the option selected. A summary is outlined in Table 2 below, with further detail provided in Section 7.4.

Table 2 | Design considerations irrespective of the preferred option

Membership	Governance	Resources
- There would be specific criteria for the types of organisations included in the representative body's membership. - Members would be organised into a tiered structure (full and affiliate), to define their benefits, voting rights, and membership fees. - Members could be organised into service groupings using a cluster model. - Federated members could be included in the representative body's membership in three ways.	- The board could have an independent or non-independent chair. - Elected board members could be chosen based on various diversity and skills requirements. - Members could be allocated equal or weighted votes for decision making processes. - There are additional board considerations, such as term durations and limits, and allocation of standing members, and allocation of independent members.	- Funding for the representative body implementation and operations will likely come from both government and members. - Funding source would likely change over time. - Funding sources other than government funding and membership fees would likely come in the longer-term. - Membership fees would be calculated based on a tier system, considering the organisation's membership tier, and size. They would be unlikely to generate significant revenue.

- The representative body's legal structure could be an Incorporated Association or a Company Limited by Guarantee.

Potential benefits and risks of each of the options should be considered to inform any next steps for representative body implementation

Table 3 below presents a comparative analysis of four potential peak body models, outlining their respective benefits and risks. Each option offers distinct advantages, such as enhanced sector advocacy, improved service delivery, and streamlined access to support. This should be considered alongside potential challenges such as resource constraints, implementation complexity. Table 3 provides an overview of the trade-offs associated with each model which should be used to inform the decision-making process and potential next steps.

Table 3 | Comparative analysis of four potential representative body options

Option	Benefits	Risks
A	• Strong sector advocacy, collaboration, and efficient operations.	• Potential strain on small operational team.
A+	• Builds on option A with research guiding enhanced advocacy and development evidence-based practices for ESOs.	• Requires balancing core functions and building research capacity.
B	• Improves service quality and consistency through training, code of conduct, communities of practice and information for veterans.	• Challenges with enforcing the code and ensuring widespread adoption.
B+	• Builds on B with a centralised service directory for improved service access.	• Requires technical expertise and resources for service directory implementation.

DVA should wait until recommendations of the Royal Commission are released before consulting further on the representative body with the sector and governments

We have outlined a high-level possible implementation approach in Section 8 in five stages. These initial two phases focus on agreeing the design and preparing for establishment of the representative body.

- Phase 1 focuses on confirming the most suitable model with broad support and determining the most appropriate funding mechanism.
- Phase 2 focuses on preparing for the launch of the representative body by establishing its legal framework, governance structure, and acquiring essential resources.

The final implementation phases focus on operationalisation and growth of the representative body.

- Phase 3 focuses on launching the representative body and establishing a clear roadmap for its initial operations.
- Phase 4 prioritises delivering on the representative body's core functions and solidifying its position within the sector.
- Finally, Phase 5 focuses on scaling the representative body's remit and securing long-term sustainability.

2 Introduction and background

DVA engaged Nous Group to independently identify a set of options for the establishment of a Veteran and Family Organisations representative body

The Royal Commission has heard evidence from ex-services organisations on the desire to establish a 'peak body' for ESOs. For the purposes of this report we have used the title representative body. It is expected that the Royal Commission's final recommendations, due to be released in September 2024, will include reference to the establishment of a representative body.

This report intends to provide the basis for DVA to respond to Royal Commission recommendations on the establishment of a representative body, and if appropriate, to provide inputs for a co-design process for a representative body with the sector. As such, the report does not provide recommendations. It provides four options for the purpose, functions, membership, governance and resources for a representative body alongside a discussion of the key considerations, risks and benefits of these four options as well as other option-agnostic design decisions.

This report has a range of inputs including comparable national and international models, existing engagement undertaken in the sector in response to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, as well as extensive input and feedback from a range of stakeholders. These stakeholders include existing fora under DVA's National Consultation Framework (NCF) select individuals, and veterans and family members who provided input through a survey.

The representative body is different to a range of bodies discussed in the Royal Commission

The representative body is separate to other bodies including:

- The Royal Commission has announced their final recommendations will include the establishment of an independent oversight entity which will be tasked with monitoring the implementation of the Royal Commission's recommendations⁵.
- The Veteran Compensation Advocates are professional and voluntary organisations which advocate for veterans and families in claims lodgement processes. The interim report of the Royal Commission highlighted challenges with the efficiency of processing veterans compensation and support claims by DVA. The Government has committed increased resources for addressing claims processing. Separate work is being undertaken by DVA to clarify the role and oversight of professional and voluntary claims advocacy organisations and the value of a potential approved advocates scheme. This is separate to the representative body discussed in this paper, and claims advocacy is not in scope.

The establishment of a representative body must align with other ongoing DVA projects including the existing review of the National Consultation Framework

The National Consultation Framework facilitates communication between the veteran and ex-service community, the Repatriation and Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Commissions, government and DVA. It is reviewed formally every three years and is currently under review.⁶ A range of forums including the Ex-Service Organisation Round Table (ESORT), the Younger Veterans – Contemporary Needs Forum (YVF), State and Territory forums, the National Aged and Community Care Forum (NACCF) and the Operational Working Party (OWP) are part of the NCF.

⁵ Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, Update on the Royal Commission's Special Report on a proposed new entity, 11 June 2024 (accessed 6 July 2024), <https://defenceveteransuicide.royalcommission.gov.au/news-and-media/media-releases/update-royal-commissions-special-report-proposed-new-entity>

⁶ Department of Veterans' Affairs, National Consultation Framework Review, 18 December 2023 (accessed 6 July 2024), <https://www.dva.gov.au/about/overview/consultations-and-grants/how-we-consult-ex-service-community/national-consultation-framework-review>

Regardless of the option selected for a representative body, consideration will need to be made as to how the body will interact and align with existing fora through the NCF. This could include:

- A review of the Terms of Reference for existing fora to prevent duplication or competing effort, particularly in developing policy positions and advocating to state and territory departments and the federal government.
- A review of how committees and working groups established in the representative body interact with existing fora.
- A review of how governance and legislative structures embedded within existing fora will influence engagement.

This report is structured across six sections

The report is structured across six sections, to guide the reader through the development of potential representative body options. It commences with a rationale for the representative body, followed by insights from stakeholders and veterans. Detailed peak body models are then presented followed by potential next steps and implementation plan. The sections are outlined below:

- Case for change (Section 3) outlines the need for a representative body, highlighting the sector's challenges and the potential benefits of a representative body to advocate for the mutual interests of the sector.
- Research of similar representative bodies (Section 4) provides a summary of desktop research into domestic and international examples, including relevant insights into key representative body features and their application to proposed options.
- Stakeholder engagement (Section 5) explores key findings from consultations with existing fora and select individual stakeholders, informing the development of potential peak body models.
- Survey analysis (Section 6) provides insights into the perspectives of veterans and families who completed the online survey and how the insights are used to guide representative body design.
- Detailed options (Section 7) explores four models for the ESO Peak Body, encompassing structure, functions, governance, and resources.
- Next steps and high-level implementation plan (Section 8) outlines the actions required to establish the representative body, including potential timelines and key milestones.

3 Case for change

There is support from the sector for a representative body

Almost 65 per cent of the veterans and family members surveyed, think that a representative body is needed. Consultation and research indicates several clear needs that a representative body would address. This includes the need for a unified voice for the sector, improved service standards, more effective communication, and simpler navigation of services. The representative body would have benefits for veterans and families, the ESO sector, and DVA. Potential benefits are shown in Figure 6 below and were informed through consultations and responses from the veteran and family survey.

Figure 6 | Benefits of a representative body for veterans and families, the ESO sector, and DVA

For veterans and families, the establishment of a representative body will: • Ensure representation of issues and a platform for advocacy efforts between their organisations, DVA and the government more broadly. Indirectly, this will strengthen the sector they belong to. • Ensure a higher quality of service delivery through member organisations. • Deliver a centralised system for veterans and families to understand what organisations exist, and where they may receive benefit from membership.	For the ESO sector, the establishment of a representative body will: • Serve as a platform to present a united voice to DVA and the government more broadly. • Achieve balanced representation across the sector. • Further strengthen collaboration efforts between ESOs, specifically those who are delivering similar services to their members	For the DVA, the establishment of a representative body will: • Provide a communication dissemination method and strengthen collaboration efforts between the Department and the sector. • Provide the platform to improve service standards across the ESO sector. • Streamline efforts and create a more productive relationship between the Department and the sector.
--	--	---

Some within the ESO sector are resistant to the establishment of a representative body - the design responds to these concerns

Through stakeholder engagements, it was clear that there is not unanimous support for a representative body. A variety of concerns were raised, some of these were:

- A representative body could create another layer of command and more bureaucracy would be a hindrance to the ESO community.
- ESOs have and want individual relationships with DVA, rather than communicating and interacting through a representative body.
- Many small service organisations exist that are not necessarily ESOs. These may be excluded from a representative body.
- National consultative fora for the sector already exist. A representative body could duplicate many existing functions of such fora.

We have considered the concerns in the representative body options. For details on how the representative body designs have incorporated specific stakeholder insights and concerns, please see Section 4. Ongoing consultation and feedback with the sector will be vital to the success of the representative body, as outlined in Section 7.

4 Research on similar representative bodies

Desktop research on representative bodies in other jurisdictions and sectors was conducted to guide the development of options. This included analysis of domestic representative bodies in adjacent sectors, and international examples of veteran support representative bodies. This was used to understand how representative body components and features can operate in different contexts. While lessons from these models informed the design of the representative body, consideration for contextual differences and stakeholder perspectives is necessary. The comparable representative bodies include:

- **ACFID:** a peak body representing Australian non-government organisations (NGOs) working in the field of international aid and development.⁷
- **ACCPA:** the national industry association representing Australian aged care providers.⁸
- **NDS:** Australia's peak industry body for disability service organisations.⁹
- **The Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA):** a peak body advocating for the future of Australian children.¹⁰
- **Cobseo:** a peak body representing the Armed Forces community in the UK.¹¹
- **NCVA:** a peak body representing veteran organisations in Canada.¹²

Table 4 below details key components of peak bodies' features that were incorporated into the representative body options. For more detail on peak bodies researched, please see Attachment 1-Desktop research.

Table 4 | Summary of key insights from desktop research

Representative body key feature	Insights on feature	How insights were applied to the proposed options
 Functions	• ACCPA, ACFID and Cobseo play roles in policy advocacy. • Cobseo acts as the sole contact point between government, the private sector and the Armed Forces Community. • ACCPA provides member services such as training to improve quality of service standards. • ACFID plays a role in accrediting members and regulating their government funding.	Policy advocacy, training, and setting service standards are functions considered in the options. While policy advocacy was a core function of all options, providing members with services such as training and standard setting was included as functions in options B and B+. It was decided that the representative body would not play a role in accrediting members or regulating government funding as this was out of scope for the representative body and would require significant resourcing.
 Membership	• Cobseo, NDS and ACFID use membership tiers to determine members' access to benefits and voting rights.	A tiered membership model has been explored for the representative body. This includes detail of the type of organisations that fall within the tiers, their associated benefits, and voting capability. An option to use the cluster system

⁷ Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), 2024 (accessed 6 June 2024), <https://acfid.asn.au/>

⁸ Aged & community care providers association (ACCPA), 2024 (accessed 6 June 2024), <https://www.accpa.asn.au/>

⁹ The National Disability Service (NDS), 2024 (accessed 6 June 2024), <https://nds.org.au/>

¹⁰ The Australian Childcare Alliance (ACA), 2024 (accessed 6 June 2024), <https://childcarealliance.org.au/>

¹¹ The Confederation of Service Charities (Cobseo), 2024 (accessed 27 May 2024), <https://www.cobseo.org.uk/>

¹² The National Council of Service Charities (NCVA), 2024 (accessed 27 May 2024), <https://www.ncva-cnaac.ca/en/>

	Cobseo uses a 'cluster system' to organise the membership into service clusters.	has been explored in the option agnostic section.
 Governance	- ACCPA's board consists of a combination of member representatives and independent directors with specialist skills. - Cobseo's board include elected and permanent members. - NDS meets geographic diversity requirements by appointing an elected chair from each state and territory. - ACFID uses a weighted voting system for members.	All options include a board that incorporates elected, standing, and independent members. The exact composition and number of board members was based on the functions of options and refined via consultations with stakeholders. Options to elect members as individuals or as organisations and ensure diversity capability requirements have been explored as considerations in the option agnostic section. We have included ACFID's weighted voting model as a consideration for the representative body.
 Resources	- ACFID is funded 50 per cent from government and 50 per cent from membership fees. - Cobseo has significant funding from grants and donations. - All researched bodies with membership fees had tiered fees depending on the size of member organisations size.	ACFID's model of funding partially from government and partially from membership fees is similar to the representative body's proposed funding approach. Options recognise the role of government funding for initial set up and establishment of the representative body. Membership fees that are tiered by the organisation's size and membership level have been explored in the option agnostic considerations. Grants have been excluded from the initial funding sources due to stakeholder concerns that this would redirect money away from the sector.

5 Stakeholder engagement

Over the course of this project we consulted a range of stakeholders through forums, workshops and individual interviews. Stakeholders included the ESORT, YVF, Deputy Commissioner Forums and 13 interviews with select individuals.

We gathered stakeholder perspectives on various attributes for a potential representative body including:

- Language to be used to describe a potential representative body
- Why (or why not) an ESO representative body is needed for the sector
- Role and purpose of a future ESO representative body
- Structure and function of a representative body which includes the structure and responsibilities of the organisation and detailed decision-making processes
- Membership of a representative body that includes the criteria for membership, potential benefits and the responsibilities associated with being a member
- Governance protocols that includes the board structure and composition, constitution, accountability systems and mechanisms for decision making
- Resourcing considerations that includes operational costs and funding sources.

Individual interviews with key stakeholders used questions from each of the seven categories outlined above. They also explored perspectives on sector experiences with existing fora. Stakeholder insights from these interviews are summarised in Appendix A.

Stakeholders were selected for individual interviews because of previous involvement in discussions on the establishment of a representative body or because of particular expertise or experience in the ESO sector. This included some consideration for diversity of veteran community serviced by stakeholder organisations, size of organisations and types of services delivered.

Details of insights from specific stakeholder groups, including how they were incorporated in the options is outlined in Appendix A.

An overview of the insights from all stakeholders consulted for the development of the options is outlined in the following section.

5.1 Summary of stakeholder insights

Insights gathered during stakeholder engagements have been carefully considered in the design of the options. All stakeholder insights are summarised in the tables below, and have been categorised based on the five features of the representative body design:

1. Purpose (Section 5.1.1)
2. Function (Section 5.1.2)
3. Membership (Section 5.1.3)
4. Governance (Section 5.1.4)
5. Resources (Section 5.1.5).

Each insight includes detail of how it was incorporated in the options, and rationale if it was not.



Note the following section references representative body options A, A+, B and B+. These are described in detail in section 7.

5.1.1 Purpose

Stakeholder perspectives on the purpose of a representative body are outlined in Table 5. All purposes suggested are represented across at least one of the four proposed options.

Table 5 | Summary of stakeholder insights related to the purpose of a representative body

Components of Purpose proposed by stakeholders	How components were incorporated in the options
Supporting ESOs, but not veterans directly.	The representative body does not provide services to veterans directly in any option.
Facilitating communication between the sector and government and policy advocacy.	Policy advocacy and communication between the representative body and government is a core purpose in all options.
Unifying the diverse voices of ESOs without taking away the voices of individual ESOs.	The representative body would not take away the independence of current ESO organisations or their right to represent themselves.
Enhancing sector collaboration and reduce duplication.	Improving sector collaboration is a purpose in all options.
Helping veterans navigate the sector.	Assisting veterans and families' navigation to ESO supports was included as a potential longer-term purpose of the representative body, in option B+. It was not included in options A, A+ and B.
Improving the capability, service standards, accountability and credibility of ESOs.	Setting quality standards and enhancing sector capability is a core function in options B and B+. This would involve developing support resources, and tools to help ESOs meet standards. It will not involve the representative body acting as a regulator.

Note. more detailed insights on Purpose from specific engagements can be found in Appendix A.

5.1.2 Functions

Stakeholder perspectives on the possible functions of a representative body are outlined in Table 6. Each insight includes detail of how it was incorporated in the options, and rationale if it was not.

Table 6 | Summary of stakeholder insights related to the Functions of a representative body

Components of Function proposed by stakeholders	How components were incorporated in the options
Policy advocacy to government.	'Policy advocacy' is a function of the representative body in all options. It would involve conducting consultation to inform advocacy efforts with government and development of a unified response to policy issues through consultation forums with ESOs.
Disseminating information from government to the sector.	Communication between government and the sector is a function of the representative body in all options. It involves translating government policies and initiatives into clear and accessible information for the ESO sector. This would occur initially through informal channels and evolve towards a formal change management approach.
Training and education for ESOs to improve capability and service standards.	Specialised training opportunities to enhance sector knowledge is included as a function in options B and B+.
Data collection and research on the sector.	Data collection and research on the sector is included as a function in option A+ and can be used to improve advocacy efforts and guide best practice service delivery in ESOs.
Creating a space for ESOs to collaborate and communicate.	Supporting collaboration is a function of the representative body in all options. It includes providing a forum for ESOs to collaborate, share information, and discuss key issues impacting the sector.
Reaching out to veterans (and serving ADF members) with comprehensive guidance on available resources and services.	The representative body would not have direct contact with veterans as this is out of scope. This could be explored in future design iterations.
Providing a cohesive view of service options for veterans and families.	Developing a service directory to assist veterans and families to navigate ESO supports is included as a potential longer-term function of the representative body, in option B+. Furthermore, in options B and B+, information and resources would be created and transferred to the government, for dissemination to veterans at their discretion.
Setting quality and service standards through a Code of Conduct.	An Code of Conduct with quality and service standards was included in options B and B+.
Regulating service standards to streamline ESO access to government funding.	The representative body would not have a formal role in regulating or overseeing funding to the sector as: • Various stakeholders (both within and external to our own stakeholder engagements) indicated that the representative body should not regulate the sector. • Stakeholder indicated regulatory functions would disincentivise membership with the representative body.

Components of Function proposed by stakeholders	How components were incorporated in the options
	Enforcing regulation across the sector would require significant resources and an underpinning legislative framework.
Coordination and engagement with an external organisation to oversee and manage regulation for ESO accreditation.	This is out of scope for a representative body and has not been considered in this report.

Note. Insights on Functions from specific engagements can be found in Appendix A.

5.1.3 Membership

Stakeholder perspectives on the membership of a representative body are outlined in Table 7. Each insight was assessed for its potential incorporation into the peak body options, with justifications provided for those not included. Note the proposed approach to membership is the same across all four options, with details outlined in Section 7.4

Table 7 | Summary of stakeholder insights related to the Membership of a representative body

Components of Membership proposed by stakeholders	How components were incorporated in the options
Both ESOs and VSOs need to be included.	Broad and clear eligibility definitions and criteria for membership has been proposed which includes ESOs and VSOs. Membership criteria is defined by the type of organisation, and their level of support for veterans and families (Section 7.4.1). The criteria does not reference the current labels of ESO or VSO due to inconsistencies and different understandings of these definitions across the sector.
Criteria and eligibility for membership needs to be clearly defined.	
Tiered membership based on the type of organisation and their role in the veteran community to define voting rights and respective benefits.	Membership is tiered (full or affiliate). A definitive set of criteria has been provided for the tiers of membership. These criteria account for organisation types (ACNC registered charities, not-for-profits, social enterprises and for-profits) and the extent to which their purpose is targeted to veterans and families. Member voting rights and benefits are tied to the tiering system (Section 7.4.1)
ACNC registration should be a criterion for membership for the representative body.	ACNC registration is a criterion for 'full' membership. Other organisation types can be included under 'affiliate' membership.
Organising members into clusters based on the services they provide as suggested in the forums and existing Cobseo model.	A cluster model for membership that groups organisations based on service categories has been explored in Section 7.4.1.
Smaller groups and organisations that might not fulfil all formal criteria should still be included as potential members.	Membership is accessible to all ESOs through the tiered membership structure (Section 7.4.1).
For-profit organisations shouldn't have the same benefits as charitable organisations in the membership structure.	For-profit organisations may be included in the representative body membership as 'Affiliate' members. They do not have the same benefits or voting rights as Full Members (Section 7.4.1).
The membership framework must thoughtfully address the incorporation of federated organisations.	Options for how federated organisations could be incorporated has been explored, including possible benefits and risks.

Components of Membership proposed by stakeholders	How components were incorporated in the options
Members must abide by a Code of Conduct as a condition of membership.	While a Code of Conduct was included in options B and B+, it would be self-regulatory and optional. It was repeatedly voiced by stakeholders that the representative body should not regulate the sector as this could be a disincentive to membership and would require significant resources as well as an underpinning legal framework.

Note. Insights on Membership from specific engagements can be found in Appendix A.

5.1.4 Governance

Stakeholder perspectives on the governance of a representative body are outlined in Table 8. Each insight was assessed for its potential incorporation into the peak body options, with justifications provided for those not included. The proposed approach to governance is similar across all four options with option agnostic features explored in Section 7.4.

Table 8 | Summary of stakeholder insights related to the Governance of a representative body

Components of Governance proposed by stakeholders	How components were incorporated in the options
Larger ESOs should not be able to exert disproportionate influence over the representative body's board.	The proposed board composition includes a Chair, standing members, elected members and independent members that are external to ESOs. Each role would rotate every three years with no individual allowed to sit on the board for more than two consecutive terms (six years). Although some large ESOs are likely to be standing members, no single ESO will hold more than one position on the board. This prevents a disproportionate influence over the representative body from one single organisation.
Board members need to be elected to ensure democratic representation.	The majority of the board would be elected members. The individuals representing standing members rotate every three years.
Board composition should consider: - Diversity of service context (e.g. different conflicts) - Diversity of geographical location - Diversity of branch in the ADF (e.g. Army, Navy, and Air Force) - Skills and capabilities.	Possibilities for ensuring diversity on the board (including service context, ADF branch, location, gender, and skills or capabilities are explored in Section 7.4.2.
Board positions should be paid roles.	Board members are not expected to be paid, with a potential exception of the chair and independent members due to their role remit and expertise.
The Chair of the board should: - Be independent from the sector. - Rotate, to ensure fairness.	The possible benefits, risks and considerations of an independent Chair have been explored in Section 7.4.2. The Chair position is elected every three years, with a limit of two consecutive terms (six years).

Components of Governance proposed by stakeholders	How components were incorporated in the options
Mechanisms that allow individual members to have their voices heard in decision-making.	Forums and a voting system (Section 7.4.2) across all options ensure the voices of individual members are incorporated into the decision-making process.
A voting system for decision-making to ensure democratic processes and equal representation.	A voting system is incorporated into all options to ensure democratic processes and equal representation as explored in Section 7.4.1.

Note. Insights on Governance from specific engagements can be found in Appendix A.

5.1.5 Resources

Stakeholder perspectives on the resourcing of a representative body are outlined in Table 9. Insights were grouped into the three funding sources considered by stakeholders (government funding, membership fees, and grants and donations). Explanation has been provided for how each funding source is incorporated in the proposed options. Note that while the costs vary between each of the four options, our approach to funding sources remains the same. Details on the funding approach is outlined in Section 7.4.3.

Table 9 | Summary of stakeholder insights related to the Resources of a representative body

Components of Resources proposed by stakeholders	How components were incorporated in the options
Membership fees: • Membership fees will encourage accountability of members and increase financial sustainability • Membership fees should be tiered based on organisations' size and revenue • Membership fees should not be an option as smaller organisations will not be able to fund.	Membership fees have been included as a probable ongoing funding source to increase the representative body's independence, financial sustainability, and member accountability over the long term. Fees would be tiered by an organisations size and revenue as indicated in Section 7.4.3. ESOs can apply for fee exemptions (assessed on a case-by-case basis) to ensure fees are not prohibitive for smaller ESOs.
Government funding: • All funding should come from government. • Some level of government funding is necessary to support the representative body's operations • Government funding could come from departments other than DVA • The representative body should not be entirely reliant on government funding to maintain ongoing financial sustainability • The representative body should have no government funding as it removes independence and can compromise advocacy efforts to government.	To deliver meaningful impact, the representative body will require substantial government funding, particularly in the short term. While membership fees may provide some supplementary income, government support from multiple departments is essential for the establishment of the representative body and ensuring ongoing operations (discussed in section 7.4.3).

Components of Resources proposed by stakeholders	How components were incorporated in the options
Grants and donations should not be included as a funding option, as they may be in direct competition with sector funding.	Donations have been excluded from the possible initial funding sources.

Note. Insights on Resources from specific engagements can be found in Appendix A.

6 Survey analysis

We distributed a survey to the veteran and families community and received 889 responses with 559 responses from veterans, 171 responses from family members and 159 responses from people who identified as both veterans and family members.

The purpose of the survey was to understand:

- Priorities and expectations for membership of a support organisation, from the perspective of veterans and families.
- Gaps in advocacy and services from support organisations for veterans and families.
- Possible functions of a representative body to best serve the needs of the veteran and family sector.
- Veteran and family support for establishing a representative body.

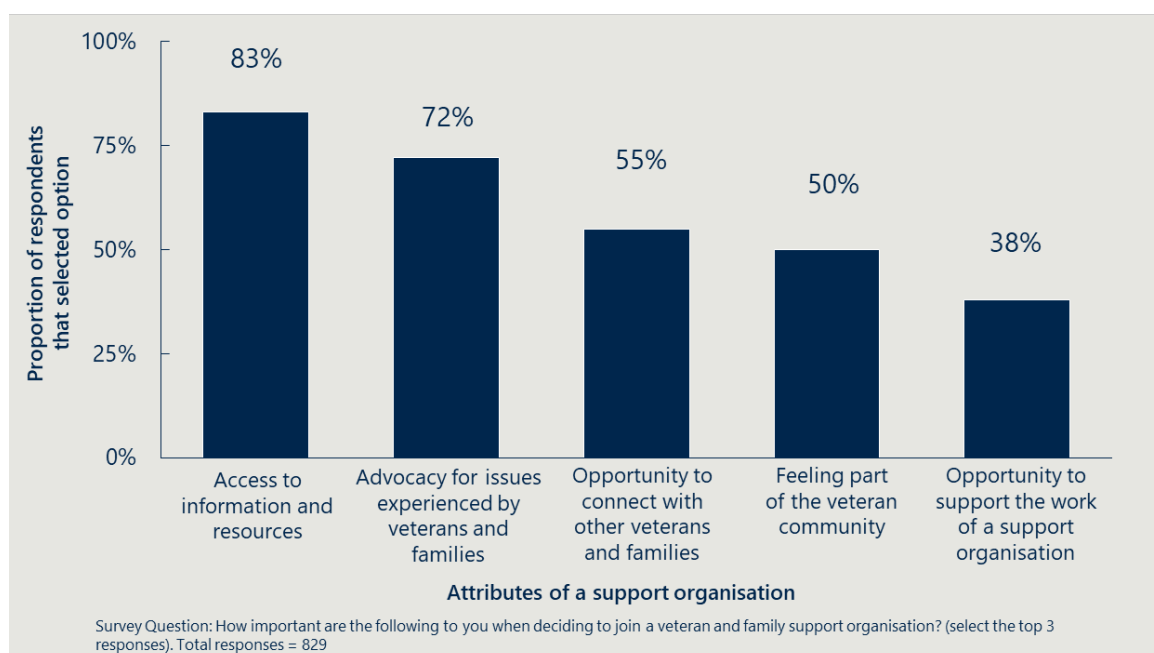
The survey was created online using the Qualtrics platform. It was published on the DVA website and sent to ESOs and other veteran networks who distributed the survey to their respective members. The survey results were consistent across people who voted for the establishment of a representative body, and those who voted against it or were undecided. For a full breakdown of results, refer to Appendix C.

6.1 Respondent's views on the current state of veteran support organisations

Information and resources, advocacy efforts, and opportunities to connect with others are the most important attributes veterans and families consider when deciding to join support organisations

The two most important attributes of support organisations were access to information and resources such as veteran entitlements, wellbeing resources, services and supports and advocacy for veterans and family issues, which were indicated by 83 per cent and 72 per cent of respondents respectively. The next two most important attributes of support organisations were the opportunities for connection and the sense of community that is provided by support organisations which were indicated by 55 per cent and 50 per cent of respondents. Employment opportunities at support organisations were the least important attribute, indicated by only 38 per cent of respondents (shown overleaf in Figure 7).

Figure 7 | Respondents perspectives on most important features of a veteran and family support organisation



Help navigating veteran entitlements, advocacy on behalf of the sector, and information on mental health and wellbeing resources are the most desired services for support organisations

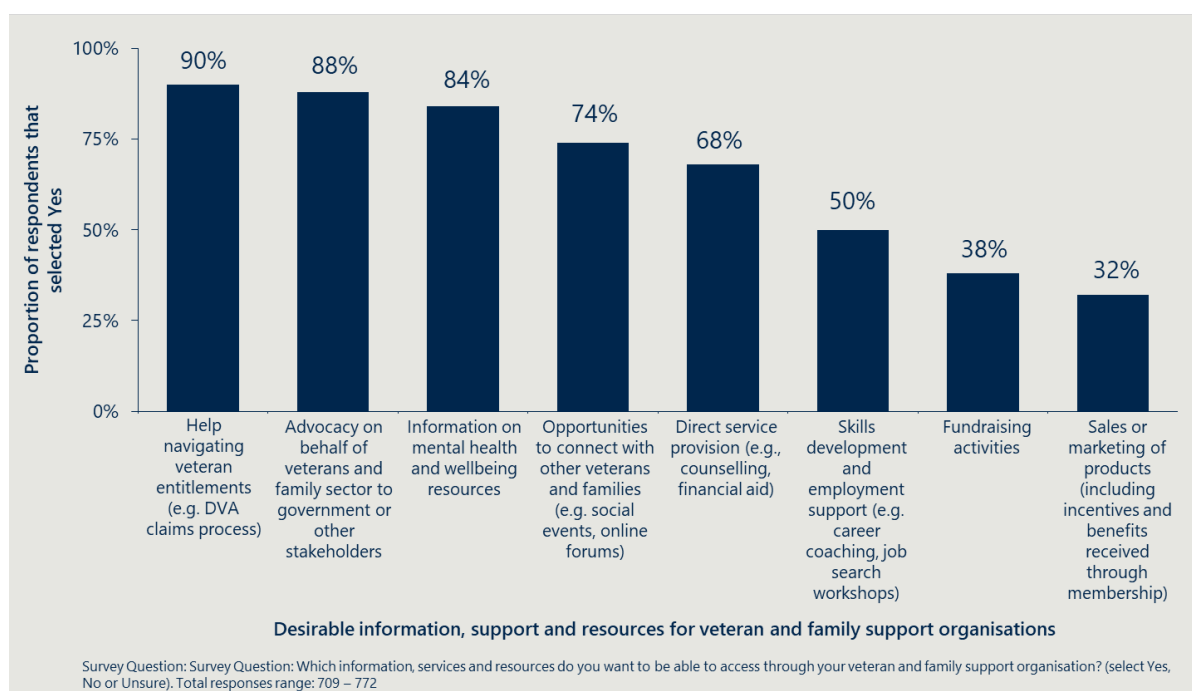
Views were widespread on the types of information, services and resources veterans and families want access to from support organisations (shown overleaf in Figure 8). Over 80 per cent of respondents indicated that the most desired services and resources were:

- Help with navigating veteran entitlements (such as DVA claims process)
- Advocacy on behalf of the veterans and family sector to government or other stakeholders
- Information on mental health and wellbeing resources.

Less than half of respondents showed least support for the following services and resources in a support organisation:

- Skills development and employment support (e.g. career coaching, job search workshops)
- Fundraising activities
- Sales or marketing of products (including incentives and benefits received through membership).

Figure 8 | Respondents perspectives on desired and accessible resources in support organisations



Veteran and families believe support organisations currently face challenges in reaching their goals and supporting the sector

Roughly half of the respondents believe that support organisations are effective at advocating for the needs of veterans and families, providing information and services, and offering opportunities for veterans and families to connect with each other. However, a significant minority also disagree with these statements, highlighting potential areas for a representative body to provide support (shown below in Figure 9).

Figure 9 | Participant perspectives on the effectiveness of support organisations

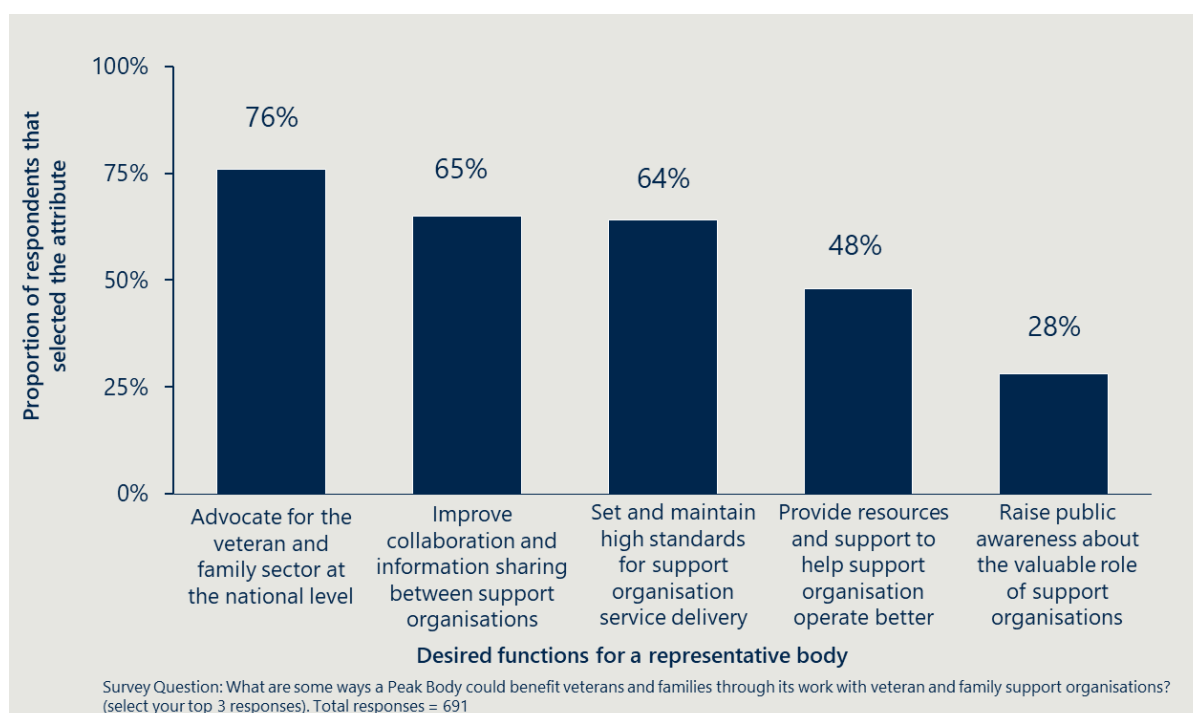


6.2 Respondents' views on a possible representative body

Respondents believe that a representative body can help with the sector through advocacy efforts, improving collaboration between support organisations, and setting service delivery standards

Respondents determined that a representative body could be most influential in the sector by advocating for the veteran and family sector at a national level, indicated by 76 per cent of respondents. The next two ways a representative body can benefit the sector is by improving collaboration and information sharing between support organisations, and setting and maintaining high standards for support organisation service delivery, indicated by 65 per cent and 64 per cent of respondents respectively (shown below in Figure 10).

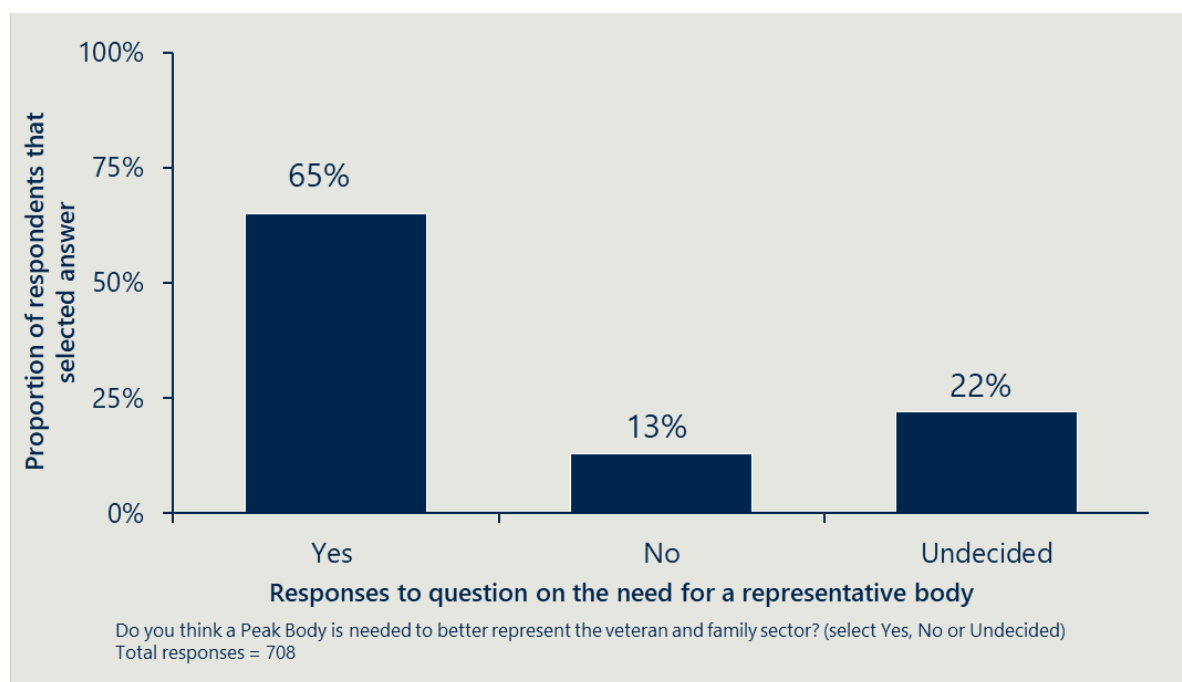
Figure 10 | Participant views on how a representative body could benefit veterans and families through its work with support organisations



The majority of sector believes that a representative body will benefit and better represent the needs of the veteran and family sector

Respondents showed support for the establishment of a representative body to better represent the sector, indicated by a 65 per cent 'yes' vote. A minority of the respondents (13 per cent) believed a representative body was not necessary. Additionally, 22 per cent of respondents were undecided as to whether a representative body would benefit the sector (shown overleaf in Figure 11).

Figure 11 | Respondents perspective on if a representative body is needed for the benefit of the sector



6.3 Survey insights incorporated into options design

Insights from the survey were used to design the role and functions of the representative body

Many respondents indicated that there are four functions of a representative body would be beneficial for the sector (as shown in Figure 10). The functions and how they have been incorporated into the representative body options are as follows:

- Advocate for the veteran and family sector at the national level: As the most desired function for the representative body, the policy and advocacy function is included as a core function across all options. The function empowers the representative body to conduct consultations to inform advocacy efforts with government and develop a unified response to policy issues.
- Improve collaboration and information sharing between support organisations: This function was the second most popular amongst respondents. A collaboration platform function is included as a core function across all the options. The function empowers the representative body to facilitate forums for support organisations to collaborate, share information, and discuss key issues impacting the sector.
- Set and maintain high standards for support organisation service delivery: This function was included across both options in the advocacy and capability stream (Options B and B+). The function includes setting and improving service standards, but not taking on an active regulatory role. This was included in the second stream of options as it will require more resources and investment to deliver the function effectively.
- Provide resources and support to help support organisations: This function was included across both options in the advocacy and capability stream (Options B and B+). The function involves providing specialised training and education opportunities to member support organisations. This was included in the second stream of options as it will require more resources and investment to deliver the function effectively.

7 Detailed options

The following section presents detailed options for the representative body. This section begins with a high-level overview of the four proposed options and subsequent subsections delve into the specific features of each option, including purpose, function, governance, and resources required. The final section of the chapter outlines key option agnostic considerations relating to membership, governance and funding that are relevant to all options.

7.1 Summary of representative body options

We have designed and presented two streams of options, each with a core option and an expanded option (designed to represent shorter and longer-term possibilities). The Advocacy Stream includes Option A (Core Advocacy) and Option A+ (Advocacy & Research) and Advocacy and Capability Stream includes Option B (Advocacy and Capability) and Option B+ (Advocacy, Capability & Service Navigation). These options are outlined in Figure 12 below.

All options share the core purpose of creating a unified and representative voice for the sector and supporting greater collaboration across support organisations with Option A 'Core Advocacy' being foundational across the alternative options. The second stream includes additional purposes of enhancing the quality of services delivered and offering service navigation capability (Option B+ only). These options reflect stakeholder input from the survey and consultation forums as well as desktop research that considered domestic and international representative body models.

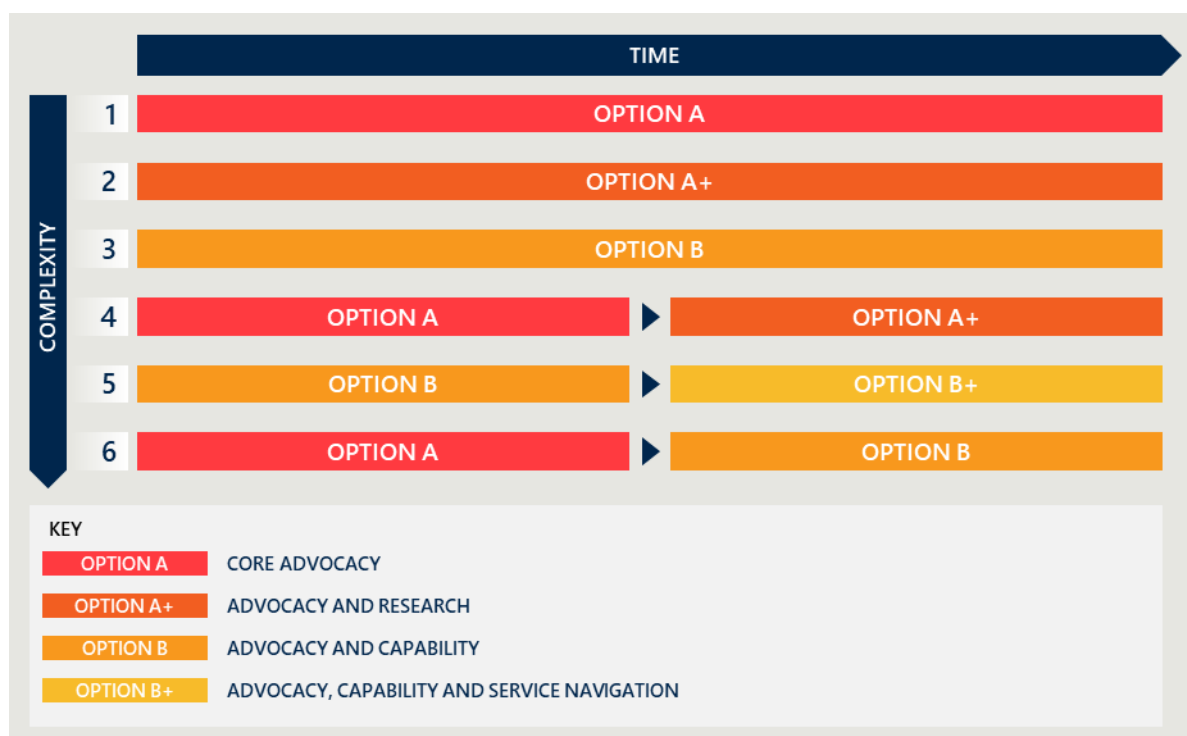
Figure 12 | Purposes of the four proposed representative body options

	ADVOCACY STREAM		ADVOCACY & CAPABILITY STREAM	
	OPTION A CORE ADVOCACY	OPTION A+ ADVOCACY AND RESEARCH	OPTION B ADVOCACY AND CAPABILITY	OPTION B+ ADVOCACY, CAPABILITY AND SERVICE NAVIGATION
PURPOSE				
Create a unified and representative voice of the sector.				
Drive long-term improvements in veteran service delivery through research and innovation.				
Enhance the quality of ESO service delivery and bolster sector collaboration.				
Improve access to ESO services through service navigation.				

Options are designed to be implemented in isolation or succession and can be considered through different combinations

There are multiple ways to implement the four options. This flexibility exists to combine elements from different options; however, this will impact complexity of implementation. Options could evolve over time or could be used in succession. Some example alternatives for implementation are outlined below in Figure 13. The alternatives were informed by stakeholder consultations with feedback suggesting commencing with a smaller, focused model, such as Option A, allows for subsequent expansion. This can ensure the representative body remains adaptable to evolving needs.

Figure 13 | Possible option combinations over time



Note. Option B+ has not been designed for immediate implementation. It is therefore presented only as a longer-term extension of option B.

7.2 Option A: Advocacy stream

Two options have been created for the advocacy stream:

- **Option A Core Advocacy** – Its purpose is to create a unified and representative voice of the sector, driven by collaboration and communication both within the sector, and between the sector and government.
- **Option A+ Advocacy and Research** - Core purpose of option A and drive long-term improvements in veteran service delivery through stimulating research and innovation.

The detailed features for option A and A+ are presented in Table 10 and Table 11.

7.2.1 Option A Core Advocacy

Option A is a collaborative representative body with core advocacy, strategy, and communication functions with a diverse board, and funded by government. The core function of this option is to unify the voices of ESOs and develop a singular, robust response to key policy issues impacting the sector, thereby strengthening sector advocacy efforts with the Australian government and other relevant stakeholders. This option is detailed in Table 10 below.

Table 10 | Option A features

FEATURE	DESCRIPTION
 PURPOSE	To create a unified and representative voice of the sector, driven by collaboration and communication both within the sector, and between the sector and government.
 FUNCTIONS	Collaboration platform: Provide a forum for ESOs to collaborate, share information, and discuss key issues impacting the sector. Sector strategic planning: Develop strategies to address identified gaps and needs within the ESO sector. Policy and advocacy: Conduct consultation to inform advocacy efforts with government. Develop a unified response to policy issues through consultation forums with ESOs. Communication: Translate government policies and initiatives into clear and accessible information for the ESO sector, initially through informal channels and evolving towards a formal change management approach.
 GOVERNANCE	Board composition Minimum of 9 members 1 x Chair - Independent or non-independent Chair. 2 or 3 x standing members - Rotating representation from permanent member organisations every 3 years. 5 x elected members - Rotational election every 3 years - Individuals selected can serve a maximum of two consecutive terms (6 years) - Options for elected members is outlined in section 6.6.2 - Note the number of elected members may change depending on option selected. - Optional: 1 or 2 x independent members - Based on specific core skills or experience requirements (e.g., finance, governance). Note independent members are appointed by the board rather than elected by representative body members.
 RESOURCES <i>Note: Costs projections used in this row were developed using Appendix B.</i>	Total staff: 6 FTE Estimated Annual Budget: ~\$1.3 million Staff Costs: 1 x Chief Executive Officer (CEO): \$280,000 1 x Engagement officer: \$114,000 1 x Policy officer: \$120,000 1 x Strategic communications officer: \$125,000 1 x Membership officer: \$110,000

- 1 x Support Staff: \$110,000.
- Other Expenses:
- On-costs: \$220,000
 - Other operational expenses: \$210,000.
- Funding:
- Initial cost of \$1.3 million per year.

7.2.2 Option A+ Advocacy and Research

Option A+ focuses on advocacy, communication, and a long-term research and innovation function to drive continuous improvement in veteran service delivery. It incorporates a dedicated research function to identify veteran needs, evaluate service models, and translate findings into practical resources for ESOs, expanding upon the original focus on advocacy, communication, and strategic planning. This option is detailed in Table 11 below.



Note the **grey** text in the table below details features and considerations already included in Option A above.

Table 11 | Option A+ features

FEATURE	DESCRIPTION
 PURPOSE	To create a unified and representative voice of the sector, driven by collaboration and communication both within the sector, and between the sector and government. Drive long-term improvements in veteran service delivery through stimulating research and innovation.
 FUNCTIONS	Collaboration platform: Provide a forum for ESOs to collaborate, share information, and discuss key issues impacting the sector. Sector strategic planning: Develop strategies to address identified gaps and needs within the ESO sector. Policy and advocacy: Conduct consultation to inform advocacy efforts with government. Develop a unified response to policy issues through consultation forums with ESOs. Communication: Translate government policies and initiatives into clear and accessible information for the ESO sector, initially through informal channels and evolving towards a formal change management approach. ESO sector research and innovation: • Identify emerging veteran needs and trends through primary and secondary research that includes consultations with sector representatives. • Research and evaluate the effectiveness of current ESO service delivery models. • Disseminate research findings and translate them into practical tools and resources for ESOs to improve service delivery. • Collaborate with research institutions and universities to leverage external expertise and funding opportunities.
 GOVERNANCE	Board composition Minimum of 9 members • 1 x Chair • Independent or non-independent Chair • 2 or 3 x standing members

- Rotating representation from permanent member organisations every 3 years.
- 5 x elected members
- Rotational election every 3 years
- Individuals selected can serve a maximum of two consecutive terms (6 years)
- Options for elected members is outlined in section 6.6.2
- Note the number of elected members may change depending on option selected
- Optional: 1 or 2 x independent members
- Based on specific core skills or experience requirements (e.g., finance, governance). Note independent members are appointed by the board rather than elected by representative body members.



RESOURCES

Note: Costs projections used in this row were developed using Appendix B.

Total staff: 8 FTE

Estimated Annual Budget: ~\$1.7 million

Staff Costs:

- 1 x CEO: \$280,000
- 1 x Engagement officer: \$114,000
- 1 x Policy officer: \$120,000
- 1 x Strategic communications officer: \$125,000
- 1 x Membership officer: \$110,000
- 1 x Support Staff: \$110,000.
- 1 x Research Director: \$160,000
- 1 x Research Officer: \$110,000.

Other expenses:

- On-costs: \$285,000
- Operational expenses: \$270,000.

Funding:

- Initial cost of \$1.7 million per year
- Note based on the design of the function; the representative body may manage research funds to deliver its own research services or manage and allocate grants to other research institutes to conduct required research.

7.2.3 Advocacy stream: benefits and risks

Option A balances collaboration, diverse voice, and efficiency, but requires navigating operational risks.

Option A potential benefits:

- Strong sector advocacy: A unified voice for the ESO sector can lead to effective government engagement and improved policy outcomes for veterans.
- Effective communication: Improved flow of information between government and ESOs ensures better understanding of policy changes and facilitates implementation.
- Lower cost operations: Limited operational staff can lead to a more cost-effective and streamlined operation.

Option A potential risks include:

- Staff capacity: Option A is designed to have a small operational team. This will require careful workload management to ensure all key functions are delivered effectively.

- Option A+ offers improved service delivery through research, advocacy, and board expertise, but requires careful management of representative body priorities and recruiting the right expertise.

Additional option A+ potential benefits:

- Enhanced evidence base and advocacy: Research findings can help inform evidence-based practices within ESOs and strengthen advocacy efforts through data-driven arguments for policy change.

Additional option A+ potential risks:

- Balancing representative body priorities: Balancing core functions (advocacy and communication) with the new research function will require careful management of resources and staff workload.
- Building and recruiting research expertise: Identifying and recruiting staff with the necessary research expertise may be challenging.

7.3 Option B: Advocacy and Capability stream

Similar to the Advocacy stream, two options have been created for the Advocacy and Capability stream.

- **Option B Advocacy and capability** – Purpose is to create a unified and representative voice of the sector, driven by collaboration and communication both within the sector, and between the sector and government. Furthermore, enhance the quality of ESO service delivery by conducting training and education for ESOs, improving service standards through a code of conduct, providing resources for veteran transition and establishing communities of practice.
- **Option B + Advocacy, capability and service navigation** – Core purpose of Option B and improved access to ESO services through the introduction of centralised service navigation function.

The detailed features for option A and A+ are presented in Table 12 and Table 13.

7.3.1 Option B Advocacy and Capability

Option B builds on the core features of Option A, with additional functions to support improvements to ESO service delivery and veteran transitions. These functions include training and education, self-regulation through a Code of Conduct, and resources for veteran transition to civilian roles, communities of practice for knowledge sharing and additional collaboration mechanics to strengthen the ESO network. This option is detailed in Table 12 below.

Table 12 | Option B features

FEATURE	DESCRIPTION
 PURPOSE	To create a unified and representative voice of the sector, driven by collaboration and communication both within the sector, and between the sector and government. The representative body will also aim to enhance the quality of ESO service delivery to improve outcomes for veterans and families.
 FUNCTIONS	Collaboration platform: Provide a forum for ESOs to collaborate, share information, and discuss key issues impacting the sector. Sector strategic planning: Develop strategies to address identified gaps and needs within the ESO sector. Policy and advocacy: Conduct consultation to inform advocacy efforts with government. Develop a unified response to policy issues through consultation forums with ESOs.

Communication: Translate government policies and initiatives into clear and accessible information for the ESO sector, initially through informal channels and evolving towards a formal change management approach

Training and education for ESO: Provide specialised training and education opportunities to members to enhance service delivery by:

- Subsidising external training and education programs.
- Designing or commissioning bespoke education materials and resources for members about the adapting needs of veterans and families, and best practice.

Improve service standards:

- Design a Code of Conduct which sets the benchmark for ESO service standards.
- Encourage members to abide by the Code of Conduct. This would not be regulatory or compulsory and would instead be self-regulated.
- Develop a 'self-assessment' tool for members to use as a method of seeing how well their organisation meets the Code of Conduct.

Information provision for new veterans:

- Development of resources and information to the government for dissemination to individuals transitioning from active service to veteran status.

Establish Communities of Practice (CoPs):

- Establish CoPs for ESOs delivering similar services.
 - Utilise the ESO classification system (or another adaptable system) for CoP formation.
 - Facilitate regular online and in-person meetings for CoPs to share best practices, resources, and address common challenges.
- Implement additional collaboration mechanisms like sector meetings and a knowledge-sharing platform.
 - Host sector-wide meetings and workshops on key topics.
 - Develop online collaboration platforms for knowledge sharing and communication.
 - Establish peer-to-peer mentoring programs to support capacity building within the ESO sector.



GOVERNANCE

Board composition

Minimum of 11 members

- 1 x Chair
 - Independent or non-independent Chair.
- 2 or 3 x standing members
 - Rotating representation from permanent member organisations every 3 years.
- 7 x elected members
 - Options for elected members is outlined in section 6.6.2 (note the number of elected members may change depending on option selected)
 - Rotational election every 3 years (re-election eligibility to be determined)
 - Individuals selected can serve a maximum of two consecutive terms (6 years).
- Optional: 1 or 2 x independent members.

Based on specific core skills or experience requirements (e.g., finance, governance). Note independent members are appointed by the board rather than elected by representative body.



RESOURCES

Note: Costs projections used in this row were

Total staff: 11 FTE.

Estimated Annual Budget: ~\$2.1 million.

Staff Costs:

- 1 x CEO: \$280,000
- 3 x Engagement officer: \$350,000

developed using
Appendix B.

- 2 x Policy officer: \$240,000
- 1 x Strategic communications officer: \$125,000
- 1 x Membership officer: \$110,000
- 1 x Learning and development officer: \$130,000
- 2 x Administrative staff: \$180,000.

Other Expenses:

- On-costs: \$360,000
- Other operational expenses: \$340,000.

Funding:

Initial cost of \$2.1 million per year.

7.3.2 Option B+ Advocacy, Capability and Service Navigation

Option B+ focuses on improved access to ESO services alongside functions described in option B via the introduction of a centralised service navigation function. This option is detailed in Table 13 below.



Note the **grey** text in the table below details features and considerations already included in Option B above.

Table 13 | Option B+ features

FEATURE	DESCRIPTION
 PURPOSE	To create a unified and representative voice of the sector, driven by collaboration and communication both within the sector, and between the sector and government. It will aim to enhance the quality of ESO service delivery, improve veteran and stakeholder access to ESOs through a centralised service directory, and bolster sector collaboration to strengthen efficiency and effectiveness of ESOs themselves.
 FUNCTION	Collaboration platform: Provide a forum for ESOs to collaborate, share information, and discuss key issues impacting the sector. Sector strategic planning: Develop strategies to address identified gaps and needs within the ESO sector. Policy and advocacy: Conduct consultation to inform advocacy efforts with government. Develop a unified response to policy issues through consultation forums with ESOs. Communication: Translate government policies and initiatives into clear and accessible information for the ESO sector, initially through informal channels and evolving towards a formal change management approach Training and education for ESO: Provide specialised training and education opportunities to members to enhance service delivery by: • Subsidising external training and education programs. • Designing or commissioning bespoke education materials and resources for members about the adapting needs of veterans and families, and best practice. Improve service standards: • Design a Code of Conduct which sets the benchmark for ESO service standards. • Encourage members to abide by the Code of Conduct. This would not be regulatory or compulsory and would instead be self-regulated. • Develop a 'self-assessment' tool for members to use as a method of seeing how well their organisation meets the Code of Conduct.

Information provision for new veterans:

- Development of resources and information to the government for dissemination to individuals transitioning from active service to veteran status.

Establish CoPs:

- Establish CoPs for ESOs delivering similar services.
 - Utilise the ESO classification system (or another adaptable system) for CoP formation.
 - Facilitate regular online and in-person meetings for CoPs to share best practices, resources, and address common challenges.
- Implement additional collaboration mechanisms like sector meetings and a knowledge-sharing platform.
 - Host sector-wide meetings and workshops on key topics.
 - Develop online collaboration platforms for knowledge sharing and communication.
 - Establish peer-to-peer mentoring programs to support capacity building within the ESO sector.

Centralised service navigation:

- Develop and maintain a user-friendly service directory with up-to-date information on all ESO services.
 - Include searchable listings of ESOs by location, service type, veteran needs addressed, and other relevant filters.
 - Integrate with government databases and veteran support portals to ensure access to information.
 - Regularly update information to reflect changes in service offerings and contact details.
- Ensure directory is accessible to veterans, ESOs, and other relevant stakeholders.



GOVERNANCE

Board composition

Minimum of 11 members

- 1 x Chair
 - Independent or non-independent Chair.
- 2 or 3 x standing members
 - Rotating representation from permanent member organisations every 3 years.
- 7 x elected members
 - Options for elected members is outlined in section 6.6.2 (note the number of elected members may change depending on option selected)
 - Rotational election every 3 years (re-election eligibility to be determined)
 - Individuals selected can serve a maximum of two consecutive terms (6 years).
- Optional: 1 or 2 x independent members.

Based on specific core skills or experience requirements (e.g., finance, governance). Note independent members are appointed by the board rather than elected by representative body.



RESOURCES

Total staff: 15 FTE.

Estimated Annual Budget: ~\$2.9 million.

Staff Costs:

- 1 x CEO: \$280,000
- 3 x Engagement officer: \$350,000
- 2 x Policy officer: \$240,000
- 1 x Strategic communications officer: \$125,000
- 1 x Membership officer: \$110,000
- 1 x Learning and development officer: \$130,000

Note: Costs projections used in this row were developed using Appendix B.

- 3 x Administrative staff: \$270,000
- 1 x Service directory lead: \$200,000
- 2 x Project officers: \$240,000.

Other Expenses:

- On-costs: \$490,000
- Other operational expenses: \$470,000.
- Note this does not account for the capital costs for building the infrastructure for the service directory. Costing of capital costs is out of scope for this report.

Funding:

Initial cost of \$2.9 million per year.

7.3.3 Advocacy and Capability stream: benefits and risks

Option B offers potential for improved service delivery and collaboration for ESOs. Navigating voluntary code adoption and ESO engagement for sector collaboration pose key challenges.

Option B benefits:

- Improved service quality and consistency: A representative body created ESO training programs, resources and a Code of Conduct can elevate service quality and consistency across the ESO sector, leading to better outcomes for veterans and families.
- Collaboration among ESOs: Communities of Practice and other collaborative mechanisms foster knowledge sharing, innovation, and improved service delivery across the ESO sector.
- Informed veteran transitions: Provision of standardised information resources created by the representative body for transitioning veterans can ease their entry into the ESO service network and connect them with appropriate support services.

Option B risks:

- Challenges in enforcing the Code of Conduct: Voluntary adherence may hinder widespread adoption and consistent service standards across the sector.
- Compliance burden: The Code of Conduct, if overly complex or not attributable to all ESOs, could create unnecessary administrative burdens for smaller or niche ESOs.
- Option B build upon offers a function of better access through a service directory but requires development and management of a technical capability for management of the service directory.

Additional Option B+ benefits:

- Improved service access: A centralised service directory empowers veterans and stakeholders to easily find relevant ESO services, streamlining access to support and reducing touch points to access required services.

Additional Option B+ risks:

- Service directory implementation: Developing and maintaining a comprehensive and accessible service directory requires technical expertise, resources, and ongoing effort. This may lead to cost overruns.
- User interface: To develop and maintain a user-friendly online service directory requires a co-design process to understand requirements and ongoing investment in technology to ensure the service navigation tool is accessible to target market.

7.4 Key issues for consideration in all options

Several considerations, identified through stakeholder considerations, were deemed to be consistent across the options. Table 14 provides an overview of these considerations. They are explored in further detail in the subsequent sub sections.

Table 14 | Option agnostic questions to be answered

Membership	Governance	Resources
- Who is included in membership? - Are members organised into a tiered structure? - Are members organised into service groupings using a cluster model? - How are federated members included in membership?	- Will the board have an independent or non-independent chair? - How are the elected board members chosen? - Are members given equal or weighted votes? - Are there additional board considerations, such as term limits? - What will be the representative body's legal structure?	- Will funding for the representative body come from government or membership fees? - How will membership fees be calculated? - How might funding sources change over time?

7.4.1 Membership

Membership of the representative body would be comprehensive, organised using a tiered structure

Consultation with the sector revealed a preference for the representative body to recognise the work of all service organisations. An expanded scope for membership will provide all organisations supporting veterans and families an opportunity to provide input, enhancing sector representation. This will include organisations that support ADF members (including Reservists, former ADF members and families). It will allow more organisations to reap the representative body's benefits, improving outcomes for veterans and family members. To account for this expanded membership scope, a tiering system can define the relative benefits members can receive from the representative body, the role it plays, and the cost of membership. This membership design would complement each of the four complete options explored.

Benefits of using a tiered membership structure:

A tiered structure permits a broader scope of organisations who contribute to the sector to be included, regardless of their type or charity status. Benefits of the representative body (irrespective of the chosen Option) will reach more organisations across the sector, improving outcomes for veteran and family members. Peak body functions such as collaboration, information sharing and advocacy are enhanced due to broader sector input and reach.

Membership would have two tiers:

1. **Full membership** includes full voting rights, possible board membership and full access to benefits and information.
2. **Affiliate membership** includes no voting rights, no board membership and full access to benefit and information.

Organisations would be classified into tiers based on their type and purpose, described in Table 15 below.

Table 15 | Eligibility criteria for membership tiers

Definition	For-profit organisation	Not-for-profit or social enterprise	Registered charity
An organisation whose core purpose is to provide support to veterans and families.	Affiliate	Affiliate	Full
An organisation which provides support to veterans and families, but not as the core purpose.	Not eligible for membership	Affiliate	Affiliate

Members could be organised by their service type using a cluster model.

Members could be organised according to ‘cluster’ groups. These clusters would reflect the service categories the organisations deliver. Each cluster would be supported and represented by an individual “cluster lead” to represent the interests of that group. “Cluster leads” could have a position on a sub-committee, or on the board (see Governance 6.6.2). This model is used by Cobseo and was discussed as a possible approach in previous forums.

Benefits of using a cluster model to organise members

Enables a central “hub” of information, that veterans and families can navigate to find the required support. Clustering members can give ESOs with similar service offerings the chance to collaborate, reduce duplicity, pool resources and share best practice. Such organisation enables service clusters to have a united voice and be represented in governance processes such as board membership. Development of service standards could be tailored to each cluster.

Membership of federated organisations needs to be carefully considered.

Careful incorporation of federated organisations into the representative body’s membership is vital for fair ESO representation. Three levels of branches/divisions/clubs have been considered for membership of such organisations: local, state and territory, and national. Three possible options for federated organisation membership are described below.

Option 1: Full membership is open to all branches/divisions/clubs.

Benefits and risks of option 1

Benefits: Individual branches understand the needs of local veteran communities and may have different views on veteran issues from the state, territory, or national body of their organisations.

Risks: Could provide a voting advantage or control to larger organisations who may have multiple branches across different geographies. Not all branches may be equally invested or committed to the operations of the representative body.

Option 2: Full membership is limited to state and territory branches and national bodies. Local branches can be affiliate members.

Benefits and risks of option 2

Benefits: State and territory branches are more in-touch with local branches than their respective national bodies. Dominance by particular ESOs is limited by the number of states and territories that branches exist in.

Risks: There is not complete representation of local issues. Some voting advantage exists for large organisations that operate across various states and territories.

Option 3: Full membership is limited to national bodies only. State and territory and local branches can be affiliate members.

Benefits and risks of option 3

Benefits: No single ESO will have voting advantage or control due to single representation.

Risks: Representation of smaller localised issues and knowledge is potentially lost. Jeopardises the representative body's purpose of giving a platform to the 'smaller voices' in the sector.

7.4.2 Governance

The Board could have an independent or non-independent Chair

Option 1: Independent chair

In this option, the Board appoints an independent Chair to preside over the board. The Chair is:

- selected based on their capability
- may or may not have previous experience with the veteran community
- cannot currently be or have recently been employed by a member organisation
- cannot currently be or have recently held a governance position in a member organisation.

Benefits and risks of an independent chair

Benefits: Addresses concerns from the ESO sector and veteran community of 1-2 ESOs controlling the representative body. It ensures the Chair is independent in their decision making and has the necessary capability to perform the role.

Risks: The Chair may not have an in-depth understanding of the veteran community or ESO sector.

Option 2: Non-independent chair

Under this option, the Board appoints a non-independent Chair to preside over the board. The Chair is an elected or permanent member of the board.

Benefits and risks of a non-independent chair

Benefits: The Chair has been elected to the board by members of the representative body, or an ESO for permanent members. The Chair understands the ESO Sector and veteran community.

Risks: The Chair may or may not be perceived to be independent from the organisation they represent.

Elected board members could be chosen as individuals or as organisations

Option 1: Elected board members are voted in as individuals to ensure diversity

Board members could be voted in as individuals, enabling control over the board composition and diversity. Under this option, board members can be selected based on particular characteristics like geographical location, gender, service context, or age. Alternatively, they could be elected based on their individual expertise or capabilities such as financial accounting, research expertise or industry experience. There would be a limit to one board member per organisation.

Benefits and risks of electing board members as individuals

Benefits: This provides control over board composition, meaning diversity or skill requirements can be considered. The board may, as a result, be more representative of the sector and more competent.

Risks: Board members are more likely to be influenced by personal agendas. It is very difficult to verify or quantify the skills of candidates, particularly if there is a large number of candidates up for election. Election processes may become a 'popularity contest' where board members are elected largely based on how vocal they are in the sector and their personal connections, rather than merit. Additionally, key member organisations may be overlooked from board membership.

Option 2: Elected board members are voted in as organisations who select an individual to represent them on the board

In this option, board members are voted in as organisations. The organisation voted in determines their representative board member independently.

Benefits and risks of electing board members as organisations

Benefits: Ensures direct representation of key member organisations.

Risks: By electing board members as organisations, the board loses control over the characteristics of individuals board members.

This could be implemented in two ways:

1. Members are elected based on the organisation's location (such as minimum state/territory requirements, or rural/regional geography)
 - **Benefits:** This ensures the needs and voices of the sector are heard on a 'local' level from across the country. This was consistently expressed as a priority from stakeholders.
 - **Risks:** Australia's geographical sparsity and variation makes complete geographical representation very difficult. True localised connectivity across the country would be nearly impossible without increasing the number of people on the board to an unreasonable size.

2. Members are elected based on the organisation's service type (based on the service cluster system outlined above in Membership).
 - **Benefits:** Ensures input and connectivity with organisations providing services across a range of sectors.
 - **Risks:** Some service clusters will contain more organisations than others. This may cause disproportionate representation if this criteria is used.

Option 3: Incorporating the 'cluster model' by placing cluster leads on the board

Cluster leads would replace the allocation for "elected members" on the board. Under this option, there would be no 'representative body-wide' election process for board selection. Cluster leads would be elected independently, within the clusters themselves. Depending on the composition and number of clusters, the number of board members may have to change or increase to cater for all cluster leads. This process could be adapted to limit the number of cluster leads on the board, either through voting or rotation. This would need to be discussed further upon establishment of the representative body and its board.

Benefits and risks of cluster leads sitting on the board

Benefits: Each service cluster has a representative on the board to advocate for decisions. This ensures direct representation of organisations across all service types. By removing membership-wide elections, the election process is more streamlined.

Risks: Members may feel they have less control over the board makeup. Control is lost over the characteristics of individual board members, so diversity requirements are hard to fulfill.

There are additional considerations for board composition

- Board elections would occur every three years, with individual term limits of two terms (six years total). Terms limits are only applicable to the individual, not the organisation.
- Member organisations could delegate their vote to another organisation for electing board members. However, the representative body may wish to consider caps for how many votes can be delegated to one member.
- Allocation of standing members would be decided in development of the constitution of the representative body.
- Independent members (including the Chair) would be selected by the board through a recruitment process.
- Independent members (including the Chair) would be selected based on their specific skill set and expertise, and may not be affiliated with any single ESO.

Member voting could be equal or weighted

Option 1: All members are given an equal vote

Key representative body decisions would be made through a voting process where all members have an equal vote (one).

Benefits and risks of equal voting

Benefits: Fosters inclusivity and ensures that all voices are heard.

Risks: Some larger organisations may feel that they should have a larger influence in decision making, due to contributing more funding to the Peak Body. Decision making can be slow.

Option 2: Members are given weighted votes

Key representative body decisions would be made through a voting process where members have weighted votes based on their size. ACFID uses this method, and provides each member with one to five votes, depending on their organisation size (and fee amount).

Benefits and risks of weighted voting

Benefits: Provides larger ESOs (which likely serve more veterans) with influence proportionate to their size and funding contributions.

Risks: Smaller ESOs may feel their interests are not adequately represented.

There are additional voting considerations.

1. Quorum requirements: deciding the minimum number of ESOs required for a vote to be valid.
2. Deadlock resolution mechanisms: establishing procedures for resolving situations where consensus cannot be reached.
3. Timeframes for decision-making: setting timeframes for voting processes to avoid delays.

There are two options for the representative body's legal structure

Incorporated Associations structure or the Companies limited by guarantee (CLG) are the two legal structures that can be utilised for a representative body. Both options are detailed below, however, only an indicative view is provided, and this does not constitute legal advice. Legal advice from a legal professional is recommended before a decision is made.

- **Incorporated Association:** organisations that are incorporated within a state or territory are hence governed by state or territory laws.
- **CLG structure:** organisations are registered with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) and contain 'Ltd.' or 'Limited' at the end of the organisations name.

Table 16 below highlights the key features of each of the organisational legal structures.

Table 16 | Organisational legal structure options

Incorporated Associations	Companies limited by guarantee
• Organisation is established as a separate legal entity that grants the organisation the same rights of a natural person to incur debt, sue, or be sued.	• Organisation is established as a separate legal entity that grants the organisation the same rights of a natural person to incur debt, sue, or be sued.
• Incorporated associations are restricted to operating within their 'home' state or territory unless they become a registrable Australian body which requires registration and obligations to ASIC to operate nationally.	• CLG's are registered with the ASIC and therefore have obligations to the ASIC, however, this qualifies the organisation to operate in all states and territories.
• Must register/apply with the ACNC to achieve its charity status.	• Must register/apply with the ACNC to achieve its charity status. After registration, the CLG will only report to the ACNC.
• The governance of the organisation needs to be carried out by a management committee (can also be recognised as a Board of Directors).	• The governance structure of the organisation must be led by a Board of Directors.

Incorporated Associations	Companies limited by guarantee
Financial reporting requirements not stringent. The incorporated association must maintain accounting records and audited financial statements.	Financial report requirements are stringent. The CLG must appoint a registered company auditor and lodge and audit financial statements and reports at the end of each financial year.
Examples include: Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) and the ACFID.	Examples include: the NDS and the ACCPA.

The next steps that need to be taken when deciding on the representative body's legal structure is to:

1. **Evaluate and understand the needs** and requirements of the representative body e.g. what state/s will the representative body operate from, where is the head office located, how will the national representation be affected by the legal structure.
2. **Consult with legal and financial professionals** to gain insight and detail into the implications of each legal structure. Align the needs of the representative body to these implications.
3. **Develop a detailed plan to implement legal structure**, by leveraging the expertise of the legal and financial professionals, including drafting an internal constitution, registering with appropriate regulatory bodies such as ASIC and the ACNC, and establishing the appropriate governance frameworks.
4. These next steps are integrated into the Phase 2 Pre-implementation stages of the **high-level implementation plan** to properly prepare for the establishment of a representative body.

7.4.3 Resources

Funding for representative body implementation and operations will likely come from both government and members

For the representative body to deliver meaningful impact to its members and the sector, there will be some reliance on government funding, particularly in the short term. A large cash injection from government would support the representative body's development and implementation in the early stages as it builds its membership base and capability. Government funding would likely come from DVA, but may also be contributed by Department of Defence, Department of Social Services, and the Department of Health and Aged Care. Alternatively, the Government could consider including funding for a representative body in the budget.

Benefits and risks of government funding

Benefits: There is reduced financial burden on member organisations with limited resources, incentivising membership for smaller organisations. The representative body can deliver more benefits and services to members in the early phases. Supports buy-in from the government and connectivity with the veterans and family support sector.

Risks: The representative body loses independence from government, which was a concern of stakeholders.

Members of the Peak Body would be charged fees to help boost the representative body's revenue, increase its independence, and encourage accountability of members. These fees would be tiered depending on the organisation's membership level, and size. Smaller organisations may be able to apply for a fee exemption, assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Funding sources would likely change over time

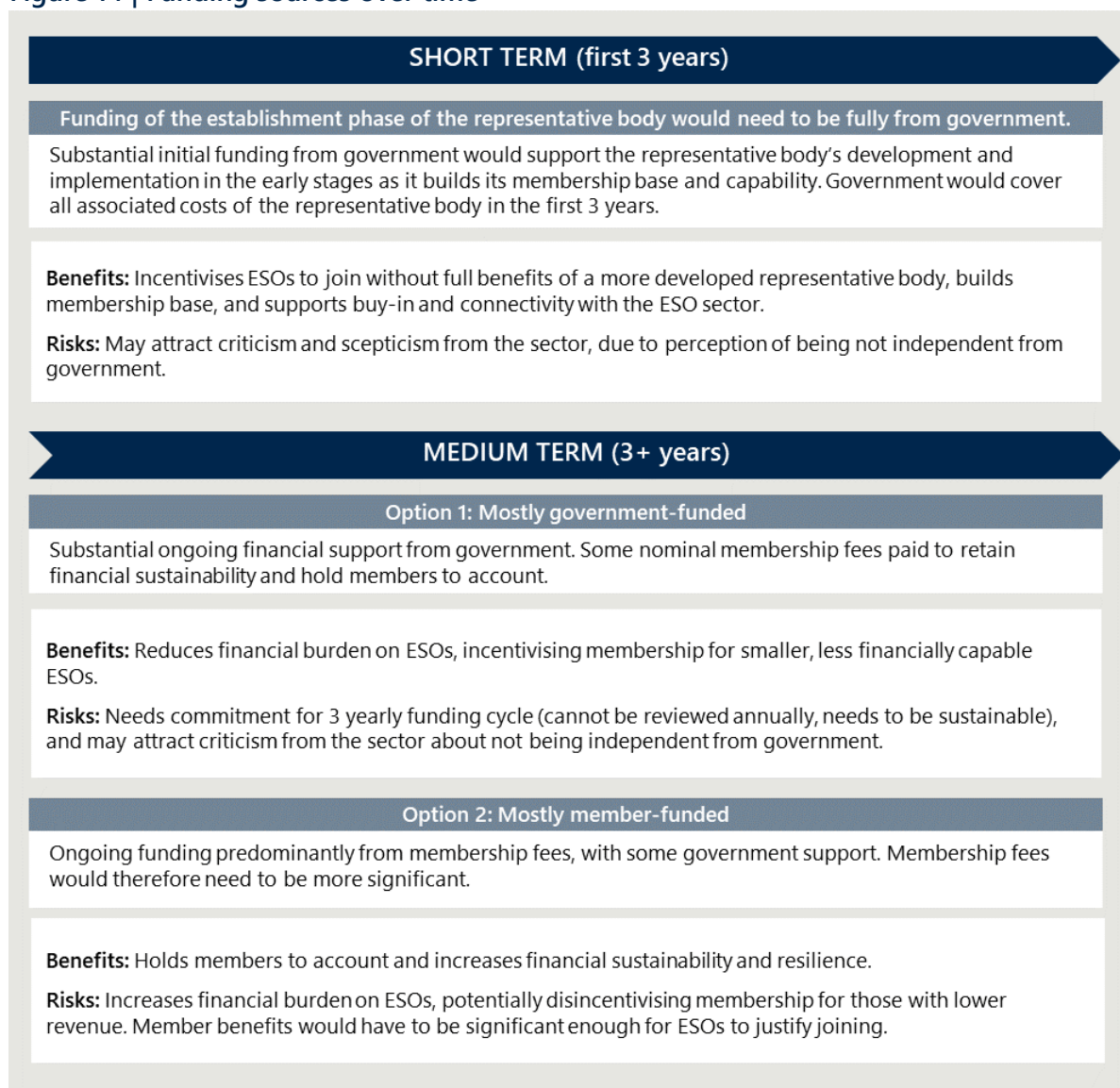
Formation and development of a peak body requires time, resources and funding. Funding sources for the representative body could change over time. This may lead to funding becoming increasingly independent from government in the long-term through the use of other funding streams. Note that well established peak bodies (e.g. ACFID) still receive government funding. Long term funding does not need to be committed to at the point of implementation of the representative body. Options should be considered as the representative body evolves and receives buy-in from the sector. Possibilities for funding are found in Figure 14.

Benefits and risks of membership fees

Benefits: Fees hold members to account, and increase financial sustainability and resilience. Tiering incentivises membership for smaller ESOs.

Risks: Introducing membership fees places some financial burden on ESOs (irrespective of the tiering structure), potentially disincentivising membership. Member benefits would have to be significant enough for ESOs to justify joining.

Figure 14 | Funding sources over time



There are alternative longer-term funding considerations

It would be highly unlikely for the representative body to be funded fully independently from government, particularly in the short-medium term. Alternative longer term funding sources, such as grants, donations and self-generated income, have not been considered at this point in time. Stakeholder feedback has indicated that grants and donations would potentially be in competition with donations direct to the sector, taking away funding from ESOs. Self-generated income was identified as not being a priority for the sector in the short-medium term because it would distract from the primary purpose(s).

Membership fees would be calculated based on a tier system

Membership fees may be introduced as a long-term funding source and could be tiered according to membership level and organisation size. Members of the representative body would be charged fees to boost representative body revenue, increase independence, and encourage accountability of members. Small organisations may be able to apply for a fee exemption, assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Membership fees would be scaled, based on the membership tiers

Membership fees would reflect the relative benefit associated with each of the two membership tiers. Two identical organisations with the same size/revenue, would pay varying amounts based on their level of

membership in the representative body. See table 18 below for an example of how membership level affects fees.

- Full members = 100 per cent of the membership rate
- Affiliate members = 50 per cent of the membership rate.

Membership fees would also be scaled by organisations' size

Fee allocations can be organised by discrete revenue categories of organisations, or by a sliding scale that utilises a formula to calculate the fee based on the organisation size.

Option 1: Discrete revenue categories of organisations

Organisations are grouped into discrete categories based on their annual revenue. The following are the three ACNC size categories for charities which can be used for organising the membership of the representative body:

- Small = revenue under \$500k
- Medium = revenue \$500k to \$3 million
- Large = revenue above \$3 million.

Option 2: Sliding scale

Fees are calculated individually using a formula. The amount of fees paid is directly proportional to the organisation's size. This is based on Cobseo's membership fee system.

Fees of other peak bodies were referenced to get an indication of standard amounts charged by similar organisations. This is displayed in Table 17.

Table 17 | Membership fees of similar peak bodies

Organisation annual revenue	Membership fees		
	NDS	ACEVic	Average
\$50,000	\$190	\$220	\$205
\$500,000	\$955	\$590	\$772
\$1,000,000	\$1,400	\$710	\$1055
\$5,000,000	\$5,969	\$1015	\$3492

Membership fees alone are unlikely to generate significant revenue

To ensure fees are not prohibitive for organisations, fees would be nominal and unlikely to generate significant revenue. Currently, there is limited data available on the veteran service sector, but there are estimated to be up to 7,000 ex-service organisations in Australia. Table 18 and Table 19, overleaf, provide possible revenue scenarios with either 1,500 or 3,000 members. Total revenue is indicative and is based on the fees by ACNC's organisational size categories in Table 17 above. . These projections could be revisited based on the report provided by the Australian Catholic University to the Royal Commission on the veteran service sector, once it is made available.

Table 18 | Scenario 1 of revenue from membership fees with around 500 members

Organisation size	Full membership		Affiliate membership	
	Fee amount	Number of organisations	Fee amount	Number of organisations
Small	\$250	150	\$125	150
Medium	\$700	100	\$350	100
Large	\$1500	5	\$750	5
<i>Total indicative revenue</i>				\$172,500

Table 19 | Scenario 2 of revenue from membership fees with around 1,000 members

Organisation size	Full membership		Affiliate membership	
	Fee amount	Number of organisations	Fee amount	Number of organisations
Small	\$250	300	\$125	300
Medium	\$700	200	\$350	200
Large	\$1500	10	\$750	10
<i>Total indicative revenue</i>				\$345,000



Note:

- The provided figures are purely indicative, to demonstrate a possible fee structure.
- Example fee rates are structured to not be a barrier or prohibitive for organisations.
- Fees are nominal and unlikely to generate significant revenue for the representative body.
- ACEVic and NDS peak body membership fees were used as indications of possible fees

8 Next steps and high-level implementation plan

This section outlines the key next steps and high-level implementation plan against key milestones between now and the potential ongoing operations and future scaling of a representative body. In reading this section please consider:

- There are five phases of next steps and implementation. Each will provide an outcome for the representative body and stakeholders. An overview of the stages and outcomes is provided in Figure 15, overleaf.
- Stages 2 and beyond will change and are only provided at a high level only. This is because the decision to implement a representative body hinders on Government processes, further engagement with the sector and across government as well as the recommendations of the Royal Commission.
- For the same reasons, Stages 2 and beyond are option agnostic.
- A detailed implementation plan should be developed once a model for a representative body is confirmed.
- The timelines provided are indicative only, these will need to be revised through the development of the detailed implementation plan.
- A detailed workplan should be developed once the representative body is established.

Figure 15 | Overview of the indicative timeframes of implementation

PHASE 1 CONFIRM MODEL FOR IMPLEMENTATION			
DESCRIPTION	OUTCOME	TIMEFRAME	SUMMARY OF ACTIONS
Confirm the approach to a future ESO Peak Body	The Peak Body is funded and broadly supported by the sector and Government	in 3-6 months	- Align options with Royal Commission recommendations - Communicate and consult with the sector, veterans and Government - Determine mechanism to setup Peak Body and seek approval and associated funding (if required)
PHASE 2 PRE-IMPLEMENTATION			
DESCRIPTION	OUTCOME	TIMEFRAME	SUMMARY OF ACTIONS
Prepare for the establishment of an ESO Peak Body	The Peak Body is established and has the necessary legal remit and resources to operate	in 6-12 months	- Ongoing communication with the sector - Develop implementation plan including key risks - Appoint (interim) team to establish Peak Body - Acquire/recruit resources to establish Peak Body - Establish governance arrangements (Constitution, Membership, Board) and mandate
PHASE 3 ESTABLISHMENT			
DESCRIPTION	OUTCOME	TIMEFRAME	SUMMARY OF ACTIONS
Launch ESO Peak Body	The Peak Body has a clear plan for the first 12 months and knows what success looks like	in 9-18 months	- Ongoing communication with the sector - Develop work plan and budget and seek approval - Develop performance metrics/framework
PHASE 4 EARLY OPERATIONS			
DESCRIPTION	OUTCOME	TIMEFRAME	SUMMARY OF ACTIONS
Begin to deliver on the remit of the Peak Body	The Peak Body has established governance and management mechanisms and delivering on its purpose	in 1-2 years	- Deliver workplan - Continue to communicate with the sector - Monitor performance
PHASE 5 SCALE			
DESCRIPTION	OUTCOME	TIMEFRAME	SUMMARY OF ACTIONS
Expand the remit of the Peak Body based on desires of members	The Peak Body is further delivering on its purpose with sector support	in 2 years +	- Consider expansion of remit of the Peak Body (e.g. move from option A to C or option B to D) - Review funding model

8.1 Phase 1 Immediate next steps

This section provides additional detail on the immediate next steps that will support DVA and its stakeholders to confirm the approach to the representative body.

Phase 1 initiates the process of establishing the representative body by confirming the most suitable model with broad support and securing the necessary funding. This is explored further in Table 20 below.

Table 20 | Phase 1 activities and rationale

	Activity	Rationale
1	Determine funding mechanism to setup representative body.	DVA will need to determine the funding mechanism for the representative body. These could include a stand-alone appropriation or fund through an existing program. These could either be implemented as a competitive grant process or a direct grant to a named entity.
2	Align options with Royal Commission recommendations.	Options should be compared on how they align with or deliver on the recommendations of the Royal Commission to support decision making. Where there are specific recommendations on the representative body features, DVA will need to decide if and how these are integrated into the options.
3	Develop key messages for the sector on next steps to respond to enquiries on progress of the representative body. This may include targeted reach outs or consultations with particular groups.	Participants in interviews and workshops regularly asked about next steps. Members of the ESO sector and veteran community asked to be consulted further.
4	Undertake a co-design process with the sector to design the features of the body.	Subject to Royal Commission recommendations, DVA can begin a co-design process with the sector to decide and agree the name and key features of the representative body including the purpose, functions, membership, governance and resources. This will require a structured approach which ensures diverse perspectives are heard and includes a mechanism for agreeing on the key features of the representative body.
5	Confirm preferred model(s) for DVA, Minister and other parts of Government.	DVA needs government and stakeholder agreement on the chosen model and its funding mechanism.
6	Refine cost expectations for the selected option and seek approval for funding.	Update forecasted costs and work with central agencies for approval of the appropriation (potentially through a budget process).
7	Communicate with the sector, veterans and Government.	Work with the sector to communicate about the outcomes of the co-design process and next steps.

8.2 Phase 2 Pre-implementation

Phase 2 focuses on preparing for the launch of the representative body by establishing its legal framework, governance structure, and acquiring essential resources. This is explored further in Table 21 below.

Table 21 | Phase 2 activities and rationale

	Activity	Rational
1	Conduct ongoing communication and engagement with the sector throughout the establishment process.	Consistent communication maintains stakeholder awareness and momentum throughout the establishment process.
2	Develop implementation plan including key risks. Note this may be the role for DVA and will need to be reviewed/updated once a team is appointed (per below).	A comprehensive plan, including risk mitigation strategies, will ensure a smooth and efficient launch.
3	Identify an (interim) team to establish representative body. Note this would include appointing an interim/permanent Director/CE and may be supported by temporary resources from DVA or contracted resources.	Provides dedicated leadership and resources to spearhead the representative body's establishment. Temporary support from DVA or contractors can bridge initial resourcing gaps.
4	Acquire/recruit resources to establish representative body. e.g. premises, bank account, etc.	Establishes the physical and financial infrastructure needed for representative body operation.
5	Seek expert advice (e.g. legal and accounting) on establishment of the representative body (e.g. legal structure, constitution).	Legal and accounting guidance minimises risks, ensures sound governance practices and adherence to relevant legal protocols.
6	Establish governance arrangements (Constitution, Membership, Board) and mandate. Note that this would require bringing members together to vote. This includes Establish vision, purpose and strategic priorities.	Defines the representative body's structure, membership criteria, and operational mandate. Set governance arrangements can assist in decision making and overall efficiency of the representative body.

8.3 Phase 3 Establishment

Phase 3 centres on launching the representative body and setting up for success by developing a clear operational plan, performance measures, and communication strategies. This is explored further in Table 22 below.

Table 22 | Phase 3 activity and rationale

	Activity	Rationale
1	Conduct ongoing communications and develop a communications strategy. Outline strategies for ongoing communication with members, government, veterans, and the broader community.	Ensures transparency, accountability, and builds stakeholder engagement.
2	Develop initial policies and procedures.	Provides a framework for responsible governance and staff conduct.
3	Develop work plan and budget and seek approval.	Provides a roadmap for initial operations and ensures responsible financial management.

	Activity	Rationale
	Outline key activities, timelines, and resource allocation for the first 12 months of operation. Secure necessary approvals for the plan and budget.	
4	Develop performance metrics/framework. Establish clear metrics to measure the representative body's progress towards its goals and objectives.	Creation of performance metrics will enable effective monitoring and evaluation of the representative body's performance.
5	Commence recruitment. Begin the recruitment process for permanent staff based on the established needs and budget.	Builds a capable and permanent team to deliver on the representative body's mandate.
6	Launch the representative body. Plan and announce the office launch of the representative body through targeted communication channels.	Proper launch of the representative body will generate further awareness its establishment.

8.4 Phase 4 Early operations

Phase 4 should concentrate on solidifying the representative body's position within the sector by delivering on its core functions, monitoring its performance, and refining communication strategies.

Early operations should focus on solidifying the representative body's position and delivering on its core functions. Activities could include implementing the pre-defined work plan, monitoring and evaluating performance against established goals, and refining communication strategies for optimal stakeholder engagement. Additional detail on these steps should be determined as part of the workplan developed in Phase 3. Regular reporting to members, government, and the broader community should be used to ensure transparency and maintain sector support.

8.5 Phase 5 Scale

Phase 5 should prioritise scaling the representative body's impact and ensuring its long-term sustainability through potential service expansion, strengthened advocacy efforts, and diversified funding models.

Once the representative body is established and operational, the Leadership Team, Board and its members will need to determine the next steps for the representative body. This could include scaling the representative body's impact and ensuring long-term sustainability. Activities could include:

- Review and potentially expand the representative body's remit to better serve member needs as demonstrated in Figure 13.
- Strengthen advocacy efforts to building on successes.
- Review and implement sustainable funding models. (cross reference section where we talk to shorter- and longer-term funding arrangements).
- Invest in technology and innovation, aiming to improve internal operations, member communication, and service delivery.
- Develop targeted membership growth strategies to ensure representative body remains a representative voice for the entire ESO sector.

Through these activities, Phase 5 could be the foundation for the representative body's ongoing influence and growth.

Appendix A Detailed stakeholder engagements insights:

Throughout this project we consulted a range of stakeholders through forums, workshops and individual interviews including:

- The Ex-Service Organisation Round Table (ESORT)
- The Younger Veterans – Contemporary Needs Forum (YVF)
- The Deputy Commissioner Forum (Western Australia)
- The Deputy Commissioner Forum (New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory)
- The Deputy Commissioner Forum (Tasmania)
- The Deputy Commissioner Forum (Queensland)
- The Deputy Commissioner Forum (Victoria)
- Del Gaudry (President of Defence Force Welfare Association)
- Michael von Berg (Chairperson of ADSO)
- Sir Nicholas Pope (Chairperson of Cobseo)
- Philip Winter (Chief Executive Officer of RSL National)
- John Caligari (Chairperson of Oasis Townsville)
- Max Ball (National President of Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia)
- Ian Lindgren (Chairperson of Australian Peacekeeper and Peacemaker Veterans' Association)
- Michael Carmody (Chairman (retired) at Paratus Global Consulting)
- Katie Maloney (RSL Queensland)
- Cherisa Pearce (National Ambassador for RSL Australia)
- Kylie James (Founder of Veterans Retreat)
- Rachael Cosgrove (President of Defence Gay and Lesbian information Service)
- Andrew Condon (Industry Professor Veterans and their Families, Australian Catholic University).

A.1 ESORT Forum

During the ESORT forum, participants shared several key insights for consideration:

- **ESO definition:** The term "ESO" may not capture all organisations working with veterans and families. For example, organisations that provide kinship or comradeship may not classify themselves as ESOs as they may not see themselves as providing services. Many ESOs/VSOs provide support to families and current ADF personnel so 'veterans and families organisations' might be a better way to describe organisations than ESO. Other people emphasised the importance of including 'families' and how this was essential to defining organisations.
- **The need for an ESO representative body:** An ESO/VSO representative body should be separate to an independent body to implement recommendations from the Royal Commission. We need to ensure we understand the context of the Royal Commission recommendations, including that it is unlikely

they have considered the role of the ESO sector in depth. ADSO already exists as an ESO representative body and ESORT currently acts as a voice for the sector. It's not clear if we need a representative body in addition to ESORT and ADSO. It is important to recognise there are limitations on what a representative body can achieve. There is a perception that ESORT does not represent all veterans and this needs to be addressed.

- **The role and purpose of an ESO representative body:** There needs to be an effective and direct pathway to communicate with government. The representative body could provide a platform for government to communicate with the sector on what it is prioritising. A representative body can be a central place for the veteran and family sector to raise concerns and identify gaps. The representative body cannot take away the independence of current ESO organisations, or their right to represent themselves. There is a need to establish if a representative body is necessary, or if existing fora should be refined. Veterans and families need support to navigate services, including before they are discharged from service.
- **The structure and function of an ESO representative body:** ESORT members identified that policy advocacy needs to be the priority. Communication between the representative body and government should go both ways. There is an opportunity to hold a service directory in a centralised point so that individuals can understand what organisations may suit them, including those transitioning from active service, who need to be supported to be successful and set up with supports. There is opportunity to streamline grant funding through the representative body, and regulate service standards, in a sector that is currently underregulated.
- **The membership of an ESO representative body:** There should be clear benefits and incentives for member organisations to join the body. This includes knowing that the body will unify the voices of the sector to government. An incentive to join could be achieved through government grant opportunities, aligned to representative body membership. There needs to be clarity on what defines an ESO, to ensure the representative body reaches the right organisations, and the right people can access the benefits. Membership needs to be accessible to all ESOs, through tiered membership fees/structures. Membership needs to be representative of the diversity of the sector. Smaller groups may not meet ACNC standards but should still be included. VSOs should also be able to access membership, not just ESOs. Memberships should be tiered to account for size, function and organisation status.
- **The governance of an ESO representative body:** The representative body should consider having an independent chair or a rotating chair (from its permanent members). The optics of independence will be compromised if DVA appoints the chair of the board. There should be an option to bring independent experts in to advise on issues. Members of the board need to be representative of the sector, this could include having a combination of standing members from established organisations and others who rotate.
- **The resourcing of an ESO representative body:** The representative body should be funded by government, but not necessarily DVA (given potential impact on independence). The funding from government needs to be sustainable on a three yearly cycle – it should not require annual review. Funding for the representative body cannot come at the cost of existing funding streams to ESOs. If the representative body was to seek funding from donations, it would need to demonstrate that those funds are spent on service delivery, not staffing and administrative costs. The representative body requires a CEO. Staff funding needs to be carefully considered to ensure spending is going to the right place. Members will want to see the outputs of their contribution, including how funds are being distributed to deliver on representative body functions.

Table 23 | Insights from the ESORT forum that were either included or withheld from the final options

Key Feature	Engagement insights included within options design	Engagement insights not fully included in options design and rationale
Role and Purpose	- Communication between the representative body and government is incorporated into all options. - Assisting veterans and families' navigation to ESO supports was included as a potential longer-term purpose of the representative body, in option B+. - The representative body would not take away the independence of current ESO organisations, or their right to represent themselves.	Assisting veterans and families' navigation to ESO supports was not included as a purpose of the representative body in options A, A+ or B. It would be too complicated to implement in the shorter term, given its indication as a lower priority across stakeholder engagements.
Structure and Function	- Policy and advocacy was included as a core function of all four options. - Developing a service directory to assist veterans and families to navigate ESO supports was included as a potential longer-term function of the representative body, in option B+.	- Developing a service directory to assist veterans and families to navigate ESO supports was not included as a function of the representative body in options A, A+ or B. It would require too many resources to implement, unless the representative body was more fully developed. - Using the representative body to regulate service standards and streamline government funding to the sector was not included as a function. This was due to a variety of factors: - It was repeatedly articulated by stakeholders (both within and external to our own stakeholder engagements) that the representative body should not regulate the sector. - If the representative body was a regulator, membership would be disincentivised. - Enforcing regulation across the sector would require a significant amount of resources, to the point of being unfeasible in the existing scope of the representative body designs.
Membership	- Membership is incentivised by (at a minimum) providing organisations with a platform to have an amplified and united voice. - Clarity has been provided on the exact criteria for the types of organisations that could be eligible for membership. - Membership is accessible to all ESOs through the tiered membership structure. - Smaller groups which don't meet ACNC standards are still included in Affiliate membership.	- Incentivising membership by streamlining government funding through the representative body was not included. This was due to a variety of factors: - It was repeatedly articulated by stakeholders (both within and external to our own stakeholder engagements) that the representative body should not regulate the sector. - Regulating services across the sector would require a significant amount of resources, to the point of being unfeasible in the existing scope of the representative body designs.
Governance	We have included the option of an independent chair.	N/A

	• We have included the option for independent board members to be included, based on skills and experience requirements • Members of the board are representative of the sector by having a combination of standing members from established organisations and others who rotate.	
Resources	• Government funding has been included as the predominant funding source for the representative body. • Government funding external to DVA has been identified as a potential source of funding. • The lack of continuity of government funding has been included as a risk in the options. • We have excluded donations from the possible initial funding sources. • We have included a CEO in all options.	N/A

A.2 Deputy Commissioner Forum Western Australia

The Deputy Commissioner Forum Western Australia identified the following issues:

1. **Role and purpose:** The primary role of the representative body would be as a central place to collect data on how organisations are helping veterans and family members.
2. **Structure and function:** Setting quality standards is an important function which would likely come much later in the representative body's life. This would involve developing support, resources, and tools to help ESOs meet standards, rather than acting as a regulator. The representative body should have a function to facilitate communication with government. The representative body should consult with other bodies across the Defence and Veterans sectors, or it would overlap with existing work.
3. **Membership:** Membership criteria could include ACNC registration, but potentially not applicable for all members. Other organisations, such as corporate and non-charitable organisations could be included as Affiliate members. Affiliate members wouldn't have voting rights. All members should have serving veterans and families as their core purpose, but don't necessarily need to be run by veterans or families. There shouldn't be criteria about organisation size, as this would exclude smaller organisations.
4. **Governance:** Trying to ensure diversity of a board is like "opening a can of worms". The main way to logistically ensure diversity is by avoiding overrepresentation of one ESO and never having permanent members. All members would be elected and paid, with defined term limits. Service delivery types and states and territories would also be ways to address diversity concerns. The chair should be independent and selected based on skills.
5. **Resources:** Resourcing should be a combination of membership fees (based on organisation size and ability) and government funding. The representative body could also provide professional services as a revenue stream opportunity.

Table 24 | Ideas from the Deputy Commissioner Forum Western Australia that were either included or withheld from the final options

Key Feature	Engagement insights included within options design	Engagement insights not fully included in options design and rationale
Role and Purpose	Data collection and research on the sector was included as a purpose in option A+.	Data collection and research on the sector was not included as a purpose of options A, B and B+, due to being identified across broader stakeholder consultations as a lower priority.
Structure and Function	- Setting quality standards is a core function in options B and B+. This would involve developing support, resources, and tools to help ESOs meet standards, rather than acting as a regulator. - All options include functions to facilitate communication with government.	Representative body consultation with other bodies across the Defence and Veteran sectors has not been explored in the options as it is out of scope for this project. This is not to say this could not be explored in future design stages.
Membership	- ACNC registration is a requirement for Full membership, with other organisations able to join as Affiliate members. - Affiliate members wouldn't have voting rights. - Member organisations don't need to be run by veterans and families. - There are no criteria about organisation size.	Organisations whose core purpose is not to support veterans and families may be incorporated in the representative body membership. However, these organisations are still differentiated through the membership tiers.
Governance	- There are defined term limits, with board-members re-elected every three years. - Diversity of the board has been considered in terms of factors such as gender, region, ESO size, conflict etc.	- Standing members have been included on the board due to the significance of a few organisations to the sector in terms of supports, members and activities. Selection of organisation representatives to sit on the board are re-assessed every three years to avoid over-representation of a single voice. - Board members are not expected to be paid, with a potential exception of the chair and independent members, as they are representing their organisation in an official, and often paid, capacity.
Resources	Resourcing will be a combination of membership fees (based on organisation size and ability) and government funding.	Providing professional services to generate revenue has not been explored in the options. Self-generated income was identified as not being a priority for the sector in the short-medium term because it would distract from the primary purpose(s).

A.3 Deputy Commissioner Forum Tasmania

The Deputy Commissioner Forum Tasmania highlighted these important takeaways amongst the five key features:

1. **Role and purpose:** It is essential that the representative body listens to the opinions of its members and remains an independent body that is not influenced by politics and government. The representative body should focus on policy and advocacy, balanced representation, facilitating collaboration and communication amongst the sector, and ensuring no duplication of functions with other bodies in the sector.
2. **Structure and function:** Effective promotion of support to veterans and families should be direct and complementary to existing ESOs, with adequately trained personnel and accessible information. Services should also be provided to veteran's pre-discharge from military service.
3. **Membership:** Membership of the proposed representative body should not be mandatory for all organisations. A strong understanding of the benefits will need to be communicated to encourage members to join. Membership should also be segregated based on if organisations are for-profit versus not-for-profit.
4. **Governance:** The representative body needs to have effective leadership, with geographical considerations, skill-based board selection, while balancing sectoral needs and wants with an emphasis on both state and national representations.
5. **Resources:** Government funding is essential, but this funding tends to cease after some time. Membership should be linked to funding, however, there is a risk that membership fees will drive ESO's away from joining. Resourcing could be bolstered by procuring the right partnerships with organisations such as the Australian Football League and National Rugby League.

Majority of the feedback and insights from stakeholder engagement were incorporated into the options design, however, certain suggestions were also withheld and adjusted according to the needs of the representative body.

Table 25 | Deputy Commissioner Forum Tasmania insights inclusions and exclusions from options design

Key Feature	Engagement insights included within options design	Engagement insights not fully included in options design and rationale
Role and Purpose	Policy and advocacy, balanced representation and communication are all essential parts of the representative body and have been incorporated into option A – Core Advocacy and hence throughout all other options.	N/A
Structure and Function	- Underlying features such as independence from government and ensuring minimal duplication of functions is key for the effective functionality of the representative body. - A key function of the representative body should be to encourage collaboration of organisations within the sector.	N/A

Membership	• A tier system within the membership exists as part of the membership structure design. Success in membership is reliant on effective communication of the benefits of representative body membership to the sector. • Tiered membership has been incorporated, and membership based on for-profit versus not-for-profit organisations is one of the criteria in distinguishing between full and affiliate members. If membership fees were introduced, they would be determined by the size of the organisation. • It was determined that this was a more robust and effective way to design fee structure for a large and diverse sector.	N/A
Governance	• All options include elected members who will rotationally sit on the Board. This selection is based on capability and ensures there is diverse representation. • Diverse representation on the Board considers region and size and promotes balance and independence.	N/A
Resources	• Resource design has acknowledged that government funding is a shorter-term outcome, hence, a medium-term option of progressing to membership fee-based funding was included within the design.	N/A

A.4 Deputy Commissioner Forum Victoria

The Deputy Commissioner Forum Victoria highlighted these important takeaways amongst the five key features:

1. **Role and purpose:** It is important the representative body acts in the best interests of the sector and is responsible for advocacy to government.
2. **Structure and function:** Concerns were raised that existing ESOs, who collaborate organically, may not benefit from any additional funds allocated to promote collaboration. Rather the support should be focused on those who are doing the 'work on the ground'. A major concern is that veterans and families continue to struggle with awareness of available services. The representative body should focus on skilled advocacy to government rather than adding to competition and duplicating efforts that are predominantly within the DVA's remit.
3. **Membership:** The representative body should not impose membership fees on not-for-profit ESOs, instead, it should receive government funding to prevent diverting resources from services for veterans and families. Memberships need to offer an equal voice to all organisations while requiring for-profits to demonstrate social impact before joining. It is also important to clarify whether organisations with branch structures require one or multiple memberships.
4. **Governance:** The formation of the representative body should prioritise expertise and merit over organisational size to ensure a diverse and skill-based governance structure aligned with its strategic purpose. Both the level of independence and the board's composition hinge on whether it operates with a commercial or advocacy focus.
5. **Resources:** As government funding will be core, there needs to be assurances and mechanisms to ensure the representative body is independent. Government should avoid redirecting funding that would otherwise would have gone to ESO's. However, if the representative body were to use a self-funded model, there needs to be clear and communicable rationale and benefits for ESO membership.

Much of the feedback and insights from stakeholder engagement were incorporated into the options design, however, certain suggestions were also withheld and adjusted according to the needs of the representative body.

Table 26 | Deputy Commissioner Forum Victoria insights inclusions and exclusions from options design

Key Feature	Engagement insights included within options design	Engagement insights not fully included in options design and rationale
Role and Purpose	Advocacy to government is a core responsibility of the representative body that has been incorporated into all the options.	N/A
Structure and Function	- Option B+ incorporates a centralised service navigation function that will work to direct and provide reliable information to veterans and families. - This function is especially important in creating accessible information and addresses ongoing concerns about effective information dissemination.	N/A
Membership	Membership has been structured in a comprehensive manner, in which all organisations are provided voting rights (granted they are full members), providing an equal voice for all members.	- A tiered membership fee structure has been introduced as an option if government funding is not viable in the long term. - However, mechanisms have been included to ensure that fees are proportional to the size and earnings of each respective organisation. In some cases, there may also be fee exemption for smaller ESOs.
Governance	- Equal voting options have been included as part of the governance processes to encourage all members to be equally heard. - All governance structure options include elected members, in which selection is based on skills and experience as well as diversity, to ensure leaders are capable in achieving the representative body's and sectors goals.	N/A
Resources	- Mechanisms to improve independence such as independent elected Board members and the option to elect an independent Board Chair have been included in the options. - A majority member funded approach has been included to promote independence and increase accountability of members.	N/A

A.5 Deputy Commissioner Forum New South Wales (NSW) and Australian Capital Territory (ACT)

The Deputy Commissioner Forum NSW and ACT highlighted these important takeaways amongst the five key features:

1. **Role and Purpose:** The representative body should exist to improve outcomes for veterans, predominantly through policy advocacy. It should increase capability and collaboration across the sector, while recognising this is not only improving the ESOs themselves. Independence from the government, particularly the DVA, is essential to maintain an impartial stance.
2. **Structure and Function:** It should provide best-practice guidance and support but not directly involve itself in individual service delivery. Training offered by the representative body must be specific and aimed at enhancing sector knowledge without duplicating the responsibilities of existing entities like DVA or Defence.
3. **Membership:** Membership must be defined by establishing a clear definition of "ESO". ACNC registration could be a criteria for membership. For-profit organisations should not be as their purpose will always have conflicting interests. However, they could be potentially included if the representative body had membership tiers, such as Full and Affiliate. Affiliate membership could be mostly for smaller grass-roots organisations who technically don't fit ACNC criteria. Membership fees should be tiered by the organisations size or revenue.
4. **Governance:** The board should be independent from government, and ensure individual ESOs don't have a disproportionate amount of influence (e.g. an independent Chair). The board should be elected by members to reflect diverse needs and include independent directors from connected industries for broader perspectives.
5. **Resources:** The representative body will likely be supported by government initially, and then increase its independence through ongoing funding from members. Ongoing funding needs to be predictable and budgeted within government – not one-off grants. ACFID is a good example of a representative body that incorporates 50 per cent funding from government.

Table 27 | Ideas from the Deputy Commissioner Forum NSW and ACT that were either included or withheld from the final options

Key Feature	Engagement insights included within options design	Engagement insights not fully included in options design and rationale
Role and Purpose	- Improving outcomes for veterans has driven the design of all options. - Improving sector collaboration is a purpose in all options. - Capability enhancement is a purpose in Stream 2 (options B and B+). - The representative body would be predominantly independent from government in its makeup and governance (regardless of funding source).	N/A

Structure and Function	• Best-practice guidance, in the form of a self-regulatory optional Code of Conduct, was included in options B and B+. • No options include the representative body administering or regulating best-practice guidelines. • Specialised training opportunities to enhance sector knowledge is included in options B and B+.	• The design of specific training programs has not been explored in detail in the options as it is out of scope for this project. This is not to say this could not be explored as part of implementation planning.
Membership	• Criteria for the types of organisations that could be eligible for membership have been clearly defined. • Membership is accessible to all ESOs through the tiered membership structure. • ACNC registration is a criteria for Full membership. • For-profit organisations may be included in the representative body membership as Affiliates. • Membership fees would be tiered by organisation size or revenue.	• Determining an official definition of ESO is out of scope for this project. This is not to say this could not be explored in the future by DVA, the sector, or the possible representative body.
Governance	• The board would be independent from government. • The board would ensure individual ESOs don't have a disproportionate amount of influence by: • Having an independent Chair. • Having elected board members that rotate every three years. • Having independent board members external to ESOs (which may be from connected industries). • Ensuring that individuals representing standing board members rotate every three years.	N/A
Resources	• The representative body will likely be supported by government initially, and then increase its independence through ongoing funding from members. • Government funding has been explored as an ongoing funding stream, as opposed to one-off grants. This is incorporated as a risk of government funding compared to sector-funding through membership fees.	N/A

A.6 Deputy Commissioner Forum Queensland (QLD)

The Deputy Commissioner Forum QLD highlighted these important takeaways amongst the five key features:

1. **Role and purpose:** A clear understanding of what the representative body is, how it will be used and who will use the representative body needs to be established. Supporting collaboration amongst organisations that oftentimes compete will strengthen the sector.
2. **Structure and function:** Advocacy is a key function, but additionally, functions such as conducting and utilising sector research will be useful. Functions such as development of resources and certain training functions should not be part of the representative body's remit. However, gathering and collating information from the sector in a coherent manner will be essential.
3. **Membership:** ACNC requirements needs to be achieved by representative body members. Additionally, a pre-determined range of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) should be introduced for membership criteria. Members should have a primary purpose of supporting veterans and families.
4. **Governance:** The Board members should have some association to ESO's, whether they are an ESO member or ADF member. Additionally, a government liaison type role which is occupied by someone from government should be part of the governance structure.
5. **Resources:** Government funding is essential for the representative body as other forms of income will not be as reliable. Philanthropic support is not reliable and membership fees should not be part of the finance structure. Currently, most ESO's rely on government support to operate and ESO's do not have many funds and opportunities to fundraise.

Much of the feedback and insights from stakeholder engagement were incorporated into the options design, however, certain suggestions were also withheld and adjusted according to the needs of the representative body.

Table 28 | Deputy Commissioner Forum QLD insights inclusions and exclusions from options design

Key Feature	Engagement insights included within options design	Engagement insights not fully included in options design and rationale
Role and Purpose	The role and purpose of all designed options emphasises collaboration and communication within the sector as a key driver of the ESO representative body.	N/A
Structure and Function	- ESO sector research and innovation is a core function incorporated within option A+ – Expanded Advocacy. - Training and education for ESO's to enhance service delivery has been incorporated as a function within option B.	Option B aims to improve ESO service delivery, in turn improving outcomes for veterans and families. Training and education will be largely reliant on external providers which are subsidised by the representative body. This prevents overburdening the representative body and detracting from other core functions.
Membership	The designed membership structure allows organisations that meet ACNC requirements and have a primary purpose of serving veterans and families to attain full membership. This encourages these types of organisations to join and be central to the membership of the representative body.	Simple membership criteria were used to determine differing levels of eligibility (full versus affiliate membership). Overly engineered KPIs were avoided as to not discourage organisations from joining the representative body.

Governance	• All options include standing and elected members who are required to be part of member organisations. This allows for representative body decisions to be made by those who are affected by said decisions. • Optional independent members have been included in the governance structure. These members are elected based on skills or requirements, which allows desired capabilities (such as government-based roles) to be included in the governance structure.	N/A
Resources	• Government funding was determined to be the backbone of resourcing for the representative body, especially in the short term (three years).	• Membership fees were included as a long-term option for funding the representative body. This is because government funding can be subject to changes and potentially be inconsistent in the long term.

A.7 Younger Veterans Forum (YVF)

The YVF highlighted these important takeaways amongst the five key features:

1. **Role and purpose:** The ESO representative body needs to be distinct and complementary to the ESORT, ensuring there is no duplication of efforts.
2. **Structure and function:** Supporting collaboration, networking, and providing information for veterans regarding ESO's is important. Research in the sector and directing veterans and families to an existing navigation source will be key as well. Service standards and accreditation functions should be limited to members, however, should ensure the representative body remains an advisory body and not a regulator.
3. **Membership:** Membership criteria should be minimal and developed with accreditation in mind. Members should provide services that are best practice and are quality assured, as members of the representative body should be trusted ESO's. Size should not be a relevant factor for the criteria.
4. **Governance:** The Board needs to be skill-based and therefore not necessarily recruited from the ESO sector. Board members should be Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) trained as a pre-requisite. The election process may need to be put to the broader veteran community and independent reviews should be take place.
5. **Resources:** Government funding is essential as it is more sustainable and would prevent bias stemming from philanthropic donations. Implementing membership fees risk extracting money from ESO's that would otherwise be directed towards service delivery for veterans and families.

Much of the feedback and insights from stakeholder engagement were incorporated into the options design, however, certain suggestions were also withheld and adjusted according to the needs of the representative body.

Table 29 | The YVF insights inclusions and exclusions from options design

Key Feature	Engagement insights included within options design	Engagement insights not fully included in options design and rationale
Role and Purpose	Regardless of which option is selected for an ESO representative body, consideration as to how the Peak will interact with existing fora through the NCF will need to be investigated.	N/A
Structure and Function	- Supporting collaboration and networking is a core function across all the options and is highlighted in option A – Core Advocacy. - ESO sector research and innovation is a core feature of option A+ as a means to promote best practice throughout the sector. - Developing service standards and accreditation functions are core to option B and B+, promoting higher quality service delivery to veterans and families. - Option B+ additionally includes a centralised navigation service that allows accessible and coherent information to be disseminated to the sector.	N/A
Membership	- Membership criteria is not overly engineered which prevents organisations from being discouraged to join the representative body. - Size of organisation does not determine whether an organisation can join the representative body, however, it is proportionate in the membership fee structure.	Quality assurance of members is considered in options B and B+. However, members will not be audited by the representative body and are subject to join given they meet the membership criteria.
Governance	- The Board will consist of elected and independent members who are selected based on skills and a capability that are required by the representative body. - Within the governance processes, broader member input is allowed within the voting mechanisms such as online polls and surveys. This allows all voices to be considered within the decision-making process.	The AICD is not a pre-requisite to attain a position on the Board, however, Board members will be elected based on their capability and representation of the ESO sector.
Resources	Government funding is presented as the preferred short-term option and is also a key option in the medium term.	A member funded representative body is included in the medium-term options to increase financial sustainability and resilience. It also promotes independence from the government and holds members accountable.

A.8 Interviews with individual stakeholders

Interviews with individual stakeholders provided some interesting insights and opinions on the ESO sector, and the five key features of a potential ESO representative body. These are detailed below.

Insights on the ESO Sector:

- There has been significant growth in the number of organisations within the sector over the past two decades.
- ESO sector governance is perceived as lacking clear regulations and standards.
- A culture of 'mates helping mates' rather than formalised support structures exists.
- Competition between ESOs can lead to fragmentation and inefficiencies.
- There is variable quality and competence across ESOs, with some resembling small businesses.
- Veterans often need to actively seek out support, facing challenges in accessing services.
- Changing veteran demographics influence the demand on support services like DVA.
- Sector saturation creates confusion for veterans in crisis over who to trust and where to turn for help.
- Despite the challenges, several small ESOs significantly contribute to the sector.
- Resource allocation is impacted by competition rather than collaboration.
- Communication silos within the sector hinder effective dialogue with government bodies.
- The term 'ESO' covers a wide spectrum, necessitating clearer definitions and standards.
- DVA faces difficulties engaging with the appropriate entities due to the sector's disorganisation.
- DVA's limited operational flexibility can restrict effective engagement.
- The current representative body (ESORT) may not fully reflect the sector's diversity, or the views of contemporary veterans.
- ESORT is considered beneficial by some, but requires modernisation.
- The complexity within the sector presents management challenges.
- Achieving consensus across diverse stakeholders is recognised as difficult.
- There's a notable division between regional, on-the-ground efforts and overarching policy and advocacy initiatives.
- The sector is unique in its funding mechanisms, with concerns around the lack of accountability and success metrics.
- Many ESOs are not registered charities.
- Most veterans don't belong to an ESO.
- ESOs may resist a representative body out of concern it will take away their individual contact with government.

Role and Purpose of a representative body:

The representative body should:

- Commit to policy advocacy.
- Ensure accountability of ESOs.

- Speak with government beyond just DVA.
- Not act as an ESO, but still provide supporting services to organisations themselves.
- Reach out to veterans, flipping the existing processes requiring veterans to reach in.
- Filter out ESOs with less honourable intentions.
- Formalise governance of ESOs.
- Have long and short-term options for role and purpose.
- Help veterans connect to services more easily.
- Be used as a means of funnelling government funding to ESOs.
- Not be a service deliverer.

Structure and Function of a representative body:

- The representative body should ensure services are easily accessible to veterans through improved searchability and location of ESOs.
- A key role for the representative body would be to maintain accountability, verifying that ESOs uphold quality standards.
- It may be advantageous to engage a separate organisation for accreditation activities if deemed necessary by DVA.
- The representative body should set out to establish sector governance, including phased service standards adhering to realistic compliance timelines.
- In its initial years, the representative body should primarily assist ESOs to develop capabilities before assuming full governance responsibilities.
- A clear framework for government support and funding should be articulated to enable ESOs to meet stipulated service standards.
- The representative body should reach out to serving ADF members, with comprehensive guidance on available resources and services.
- The representative body could function as a one-stop information centre, providing a cohesive view of service options for veterans across Australia.
- It is essential to differentiate the role of the representative body from that of DVA, with the latter focusing on policy, advocacy, and legislative matters.
- There should be encouragement for organisations offering similar services to pool resources for enhanced service delivery.
- The representative body would be instrumental in creating linkages that facilitate connectivity and cooperation within the sector.
- The representative body should inform both Defence and DVA of the service gaps and friction points across the sector.

Membership of a representative body:

- The representative body's membership should include both ESOs and VSOs.
- The representative body must ensure that membership delivers discernible benefits and outcomes for member organisations as well as veterans.

- A systematic categorisation of members will facilitate veterans' connection to services.
- Service-based classification clusters, such as those from the RSL forums, could efficiently organise and categorise representative body members.
- ESOs should be mandated to submit annual performance figures as part of their representative body membership maintenance.
- A tiered membership structure correlated with organisational revenue could promote inclusivity among smaller ESOs.
- The representative body should consider extending membership to smaller, impactful groups that might not fulfil all formal criteria.
- The membership framework must thoughtfully address the incorporation of federated organisations.
- Veterans' hubs are recognised as potential members, expanding the representative body's network of services.

Governance of a representative body:

- Representative entities including the Army, Navy, Air Force, RSL, and family groups should have presence at the senior governance level of the representative body.
- There are concerns over governance decisions being influenced by personal agendas rather than collective interests.
- There are concerns regarding the potential for larger ESOs to exert disproportionate influence over the representative body.
- Diversity of service context, such as different war periods, should be considered in governance to reflect varied experiences.
- Board members need to be elected to ensure democratic representation.
- A revolving chair position could enhance fairness within the representative body.
- The independence of the Chair from the sector is essential for unbiased leadership.
- It is crucial to establish mechanisms that allow individual members to have their voices heard in decision-making.
- A voting system for decision-making is advocated to ensure democratic processes and equal representation.
- Efficiency in governance suggests a limit to board size, proposing no more than ten members.
- Geographical diversity on the board is important to reflect regional needs and perspectives.

Resources:

- Adequate funding is highlighted as essential for the representative body's effectiveness and purpose.
- Government funding is seen as necessary to support the representative body's operations.
- Some argue that full government funding is required. There should be no membership fees as ESOs may be unable to afford them.
- Others believe the representative body should not depend solely on government funds to maintain independence, particularly for advocacy.
- Some believe funding should be entirely from members through membership fees.

- Membership fees would need to be based on organisations' revenue.

Appendix B Staffing costs:

Staffing costs were developed through stakeholder engagements and desktop research. Definitions of each of the costing segments are:

- **Staff costs:** costs of the staff members that are needed to deliver on the role, purpose and function of the selected representative body option.
- **On-costs:** refer to additional costs related to employing a person outside of their salary. This figure was retrieved from the estimations calculated and agreed upon in the RSL national forums and includes state payroll tax (assumed for the ACT), superannuation, workers compensation, annual leave and long service leave.
- **Other operational expenses:** operational expenses outside of staffing costs such as office space, IT provisions, insurance and registration, utilities, travel, incidentals, membership events. There is an assumption that meetings and Annual General Meetings (AGM) will be held virtually and therefore will not incur an expense.

A comprehensive list of the costs and assumptions made are detailed in the Table 30 below.

Table 30 | Costing assumptions¹³

Cost	Item	Value
Staff Costs	Source - Hays Salary Guide 24/25	
	NFP (not-for-profit) CEO salary	\$280k
	Policy Officer	\$90 – 120k
	Engagement Officer	\$80 – 114k
	Membership Officer (Client Service Officer)	\$70 – 85k
	Strategic Communications Officer (Communications Advisor)	\$95 – 125k
	Support Staff (Office Manager)	\$90 -110k
	Research Officer	\$80 – 110k
	Research Director*	\$120 – 160k
	Learning and Development Officer	\$90 – 130k
	Administrative Assistant	\$75 – 90k
On costs	Retrieved from previous forum outputs:	
	ACT Payroll Tax	6.85 per cent
	Superannuation	11.5 per cent

¹³ The calculations do not account for capital costs.

Cost	Item	Value
	Workers Compensation	2 per cent
	Annual Leave Loading	1.35 per cent
	Long Service Leave Levy	3.5 per cent
	TOTAL	25.2 per cent
Other operational expenses	Using analysis of the Cobseo financial statements to calculate percentage expenditure on each operational cost as a percentage of total staff cost e.g. Information Technology (IT) costs will be 5 per cent of whatever the total staff costs are. Note: Analysis of Cobseo comes to a total of 24 per cent of staff costs for total other expenses.	
	IT costs	5 per cent
	Legal costs	1 per cent
	AGM and Executive Meetings	1 per cent
	Office costs	2 per cent
	Rent	10 per cent
	Audit and accountancy	5 per cent
	TOTAL	24 per cent

**Note: Research Director role salary was estimated using industry averages from resources outside of the Hays Salary Guide FY24/25. Additionally, if Option A+ is selected, research expenditure will be dependent on the level of funding and resourcing available and subsequently employed research staff will be hired based on this load.*

Appendix C Survey Free Text Responses

There were three questions that provided for free text responses in the veterans and families sector survey. These questions gave an opportunity for respondents to add information and suggestions. A summary of each of the free text responses are provided below:

1. Are there any other services you would like to see veteran and family support organisations offer to their members?

Members are seeking veteran and family support organisations to provide accurate, up-to-date information on available services. There is also a need for an accessible and streamlined approach to recognition of Defence qualifications in the civilian sector to assist with transition. There is a need for comprehensive support including housing assistance, bereavement counselling, employment and networking opportunities, tailored support for families during transitions, and expansion of services to remote areas. Additionally, enhanced access to professional development and better regulation for organisations, as well as customisable support packages and full-time fitness programs, are also desired to help veterans and families navigate post-service life.

2. In your experience, what do support organisations do well?

Veteran support organisations are effective in providing guidance through DVA and civilian systems, with qualified personnel offering appropriate assistance, and maintaining an open policy to support those in crisis. They do well to connect veterans, foster a sense of community through past service associations, and deliver strong advocacy services according to these respondents. Organisations also play a role in helping veterans receive funding designated for their support and in offering advice, even amidst a complex claims process. However, there is room for improvement in the timeliness and efficiency of claim handling.

3. What could support organisations do better to support veterans and families?

Veteran support organisations could improve their support for veterans and families by enhancing cohesion amongst each other, offering individualised aid that recognises each veteran's unique circumstances, and adopting more agile and modern systems and processes. They should also focus on effectively measuring impacts and being transparent with members, address the comprehensive needs of families, lower membership fees, and provide accessible services. Advocacy efforts need to be intensified at all levels, and organisations should work towards encouraging self-reliance within the community while also lobbying more actively for veterans' needs and entitlements.

C.1 Respondents who did not support the establishment of a representative body had similar responses and needs to those who did

Only 13 per cent of survey respondents believed that a representative body was not needed to better represent the veteran and family sector. This group did not have major differences in their responses to key questions (outlined below) compared to the majority of respondents who supported establishment of a representative body:

- 78 per cent of people who responded no to a representative body were existing members of a support organisation
- Advocacy for issues experienced by veterans and families, and access to information and resources were the two most important functions when selecting a support organisation for this demographic (at 66 per cent and 67 per cent respectively).
- 42 per cent of these respondents felt that support organisations currently represent them somewhat or very well, whereas 38 per cent believe that they are represented somewhat or very poorly.
- Advocacy, help navigating entitlements, and information on mental health and wellbeing resources are the most important services this demographic wants to access
- 49 per cent believe that support organisations advocate for the needs of veterans and families (somewhat agree and strongly agree aggregated)
- 49 per cent believe that support organisations provide the right information, resources and services (somewhat agree and strongly agree aggregated)
- 49 per cent believe that organisations offer valuable opportunities to connect (somewhat agree and strongly agree aggregated)
- 70 per cent believe that a peak body can benefit the sector through advocating for veterans and families at the national level

Appendix D Desktop research inputs

For understanding of the sector and existing discourse regarding a representative body, the following documents were reviewed:

- The RSL's submission to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide
- ESORT Meeting Minutes 28/2/24
- Transcripts of public hearings from the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide:
 - Hearing Block 1 (7/12/2021)
 - Hearing Block 12 (7/3/2024)
 - Hearing Block 12 (12/3/2024)
 - Hearing Block 12 (15/3/2024)
 - Hearing Block 12 (18/3/2024)
 - Hearing Block 12 (20/3/2024)
- Overview 1 of roundtable discussions from the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide (November to December 2021)
- Overview 2 of roundtable discussions from the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide (May to December 2022)
- RSL National Forum materials:
 - RSL National Forum pre-reading materials for Forum 2
 - RSL National Forum Forum 2 report
 - RSL National Forum pre-reading materials for Forum 3
 - RSL National Forum Forum 3 Report
- Productivity Commission Inquiry Report - A Better Way to Support Veterans (2019)
- Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission Governance Standards
- Australian Institute of Company Directors Not-for-profit Governance Principles
- RSL QLD's "Articulating and measuring impact" report November 2023
- Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (JSCFADT) Inquiry into transition from the ADF
- Productivity Commission inquiry into the system of compensation and rehabilitation for veterans from the DVA website
- Productivity Commission inquiry into the system of compensation and rehabilitation for veterans
- RSL NSW Submission
- Veterans' Advocacy and Support Services Scoping Study from the DVA website
- Review of DVA-Funded ESO Advocacy and Welfare Services from the DVA website

For understanding of similar representative bodies, Nous researched:

- ACFID: a peak body representing Australian NGOs working in the field of international aid and development.
- ACCPA: the national Industry Association representing Australian aged care providers.
- NDS: a peak body for Australia's non-government disability service organisations.
- ACA: a peak body advocating for the future of Australian children.
- The Confederation of Service Charities (Cobseo): a peak body representing the Armed Forces community in the UK.
- NCVA: a peak body representing veteran organisations in Canada.

Appendix E Glossary

In the order in which they appear in the report:

Acronym	Extension
ESORT	Ex-Service Organisation Round Table
YVF	Younger Veterans Forum
ADSO	Alliance of Defence Service Organisations
ADF	Australia Defence Force
VSO	Veteran Support Organisations
DVA	Department of Veteran Affairs
ACFID	Australian Council for International Development
ACCPA	Aged and Community Care Providers Association
NDS	National Disability Services
NCVA	National Council of Veteran Associations
Cobseo	The Confederation of Service Charities
RSL	The Returned and Services League of Australia
ACNC	Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission
ESO	Ex-Service Organisation
CLG	Companies Limited by Guarantee
FTE	Full time equivalent
NCF	National Consultation Framework
NACCF	National Aged and Community Care Forum
ACA	Australian Childcare Alliance
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
ASIC	Australian Securities and Investments Commission
ACOSS	Australia Council of Social Services
AICD	Australian Institute of Company Directors
NFP	Not-for-profit
AGM	Annual General Meeting



A bigger idea of success

Nous Group is an international management consultancy operating across Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Canada. We are inspired and determined to improve people's lives in significant ways. When our strengths complement yours and we think big together, we can transform businesses, governments, and communities. We realise a bigger idea of success.

A bigger idea
of success

750

PEOPLE

75

PRINCIPALS

5

COUNTRIES

+80.7

2020-22 NET PROMOTER SCORE
– global consulting average: +76.6